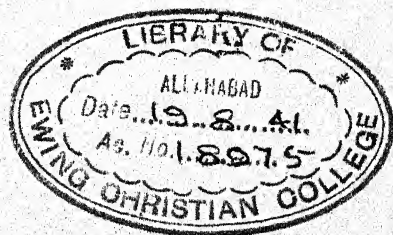


AFTER THEIR OWN PLEASURE

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After Their Own Pleasure

By
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I

HUMMING A LITTLE TUNE TO HERSELF, Lorel Mason tripped lightly down the stairs into the spacious hallway, where the telephone stood on a dainty table.

"Ardmore 6432," she almost sang. Then humming a little more until the connection was made, she studied herself intently in the long mirror which reflected the entire hallway.

"Oh, that you, Gay! Yes, I'm leaving now; meet you at Austin and Bellwood. Hurry, so I won't have to wait. O.K. See you later."

In the living room, Mr. Mason peered over the top of his evening paper at the lovely girl—his only daughter. He was proud of her beauty, her ebony hair, her violet eyes, the exquisite molding of her oval face, and the indescribable charm which was hers.

Mrs. Mason, too, lost interest in her book, and listened to catch every word, so that she might delight herself in the voice of her child.

"I'm off to Young Peoples, Mother."

"Will you be late?"

"Perhaps later than usual. It's a business meeting, you know, and something or other always comes up to keep us wrangling. It'll be beastly on a gorgeous night like this."

"Shall we walk up and call for you, so you won't be afraid on your way home?" asked Mr. Mason, with a twinkle in his eye.

Lorel gave him a quick smile. "Perhaps you'd better. I don't know if I'll be able to inveigle any one to walk home with me on such a night as this."

They all laughed merrily, for Lorel's popularity with her crowd was very evident. The young men in Young Peoples, as they called the Young People's Society, were fully aware of her charm, and although a date with Lorel Mason was indeed

a delight, it was not a rarity for most of them, for she preferred to show preference to none.

Gayly she walked to her father's chair, and before he knew what she was about, she had ruffled his hair with both her hands, until he looked, as she said, like a mopstick. Laughingly, he pushed her away. She crossed over to her mother, who put her hands up quickly to keep the destructive fingers away from her attractive coiffure.

"Don't worry, Mumsie," laughed Lorel as she stooped and kissed her, "I wouldn't be such a meanie. Not after you spent that hour arranging it so adorably for Dad."

Mrs. Mason laughed and actually blushed. Lorel caught the quick glance of comradeship that passed between them.

"Hurry and go," said her father. "You are a pest."

Sadly Lorel shook her head. "Alone—and unwanted. A child whose parents can't wait till she leaves them so they may be alone. Woe is me!"

More laughter; then a hasty kiss for both of them, and she was gone.

The lilacs were in full bloom. Lorel sniffed delightedly as she walked through the lovely residential district in which the Masons lived. She tried to appear unconscious of the admiring glance of more than one passer-by.

"Hello, Beautiful," said one young man as he passed her. "Haven't I seen you somewhere before?" joined his companion, slowing his pace.

Up went Lorel's chin, and she turned her head away. The ideal! Surely they didn't live in this community. How dared they? She wished they knew she was on her way to church, that she spent half the nights of the week there, and every Sunday morning.

An automobile horn tooted so close to her side that she jumped.

"Hi, Lo, going my way?"

It was Don Coever, the president of Young Peoples.

"Oh, Don, you scared me. Yes, I'm going your way, but I won't be any more, if you keep that meeting too late tonight."

At the corner they picked up Gay. A group of young people were already clustered about on the wide stone steps of

the church when they pulled up in Don's rather outmoded car.

Lorel was proud of this imposing edifice that was their church. She felt that she need never be ashamed to point it out as her place of worship, even to the unchurched. One could see how the beauty and dignity of its lines impressed them, even if they were much too modern to believe in going to church.

They joined the group of laughing, teasing young people. Some of them were engaged in snatching handkerchiefs or rings from one another—a diversion that meant nothing more than that in the scrimmage a boy might have a chance to touch the hand of the girl he adored, or to hold her wrists tightly to keep her from further plunder.

"It's almost eight; we'd better begin."

Immediately the "older" young girls and the "younger" young girls who had no one to tussle with followed the leader into the basement of the church, and cast back disdainful glances at "the silly girls" who were "boy crazy," as they termed it.

Finding their places in the cool semi-darkness of the basement, they began to sing.

Outside, Alice giggled, "Oh they've started. Give me my ring, Len. They'll be peeved again."

"Give it to you tonight on your front steps," answered the aspiring Len. And with a choky feeling of half fear and half joy, little Alice Bently walked down the steps without seeing. For it was the first time that any boy had even intimated that he would like to take her home.

The stragglers joined the rest with much scraping of chairs and whispering, and it was not until they had reached the last verse of the opening song that quiet and harmony reigned.

Don looked very handsome, sitting up there at the little table, with the light behind him rippling on his dark brown hair where he had not succeeded in brushing out the curls. Lorel watched him with new interest.

She had always liked him immensely, but tonight something had happened. It has been out in front, while Bill Hayden had been tussling with her to get her ring off her

finger. She had just looked up to see Don, usually the noisiest of all, standing dejectedly in the midst of all the excitement, with his eyes glued upon her. Of course, she had often caught boys eying her, but usually they had looked away hastily, apparently abashed by their own ardor. But tonight Don had kept his gaze fastened upon her, and this time it had been she who had felt compelled to look away first.

It was such a little thing, but it had moved her strangely. So, when Don summoned them to read the prayer, she kept her eyes on him, for she knew the prayer by heart, and, in this new mood of hers, this seemed a fine opportunity to study him. Before, she had always thought him a little too gay. But now she felt drawn to him by something deeper than his good looks. He seemed serious enough, repeating the solemn words of the formal prayer. As she watched him, his eyes lifted and caught hers. She met his gaze with an effort, but again it was she who dropped her eyes first.

A vocal duet by two of the girls followed. Then the business came to hand. Next week was to be Devotional Meeting. Who would read the article from the Young People's paper? Or talk about current events? Or do anything?

Of course, no one wanted to. That was always the case. Sometimes one had to be coaxed and coaxed before he would finally agree to read the article from the paper. Lorel thought it was foolish. Most of the members had copies of the paper at home, and could have read it themselves had they wished. But if the others were like her, all they did, if time permitted, was to work out the puzzles and read the jokes. Devotional night was always a failure. Lorel didn't enjoy it, and she thought no one else did. Of course, occasionally they had a really fine singer, or an artist at the piano, and it was a cultured enough crowd to enjoy that. But generally she was glad when Devotional Night was over. Of course, she couldn't tell any one that—not even her best friend. She was sure it would displease God if He knew these things didn't interest her.

But Social Night was fun—good clean fun. Lorel was a little proud of herself to know that she could enjoy an evening in such a harmless way. She really preferred these

happy times with the crowd to more sophisticated pleasures. Once she had gone to a cabaret, and had been utterly disgusted with the total disregard of the conventions she had seen there.

In her present mood, she was surprised to hear her name called to read a serious article, and equally surprised to hear her own voice saying, "Oh, all right, I'll read it."

Final arrangements for the Memorial Day picnic were made. It was to be a hike. They would make coffee and roast hot dogs out in the forest preserve. Planning details for the event took many minutes.

A first edition of a popular book of the day was ordered purchased as a gift for Edward Roberts, the vice-president, who had been ill for some time.

An account of the money taken in at the Birthday Supper was rendered, and the money added to the treasury. This amounted now to nearly one hundred dollars, which they felt was doing very well for young people. In the church's earlier days, it would not have been possible to accumulate so large a sum. But since the church now seemed to have everything needed—kitchen equipment, gymnastic apparatus, etc., the money remained in the treasury, and was a constant source of pride to the young people. Opal Grey, the treasurer, was very thrifty and kept a watchful eye on all spending.

"I believe that's all the business for tonight," said Hilda James, the secretary, looking questioningly at Don.

Don cleared his throat. "Well, I guess I'd better tell you, you'll have to get a new president for the rest of the term. Ed, you know, is sick, and I'm going away for the summer."

A moment's silence, and then, "Why, Don, where are you going?" Questions of why, when, and where were fired at him, and in a moment they were all crowding about him, forgetting the decorum of a business meeting.

Lorel couldn't see him. Suddenly she was unnerved. Her hands felt cold. Going away? And just tonight she had discovered that she liked him best of all the crowd. She had even decided to give him most of her summer dates—had begun to look forward to the varied activities of the summer with him at her side. It was childish to have a different es-

court for every affair. It was time to favor one, and Don was the one she wanted to favor. And now—now he was going away!

Why wasn't she up there, asking questions, too? Why was she sitting here nervously biting her lips? She didn't know what had happened to her.

"Let's adjourn," some one called out. "We've got to go to the Sugar Bowl and celebrate."

"You mean mourn," sighed another.

Lorel smiled as she heard a whisper, "Shh—not so loud. Give the infants a chance to beat it for home, or we'll have to take them with us."

"Let's close by singing 'Blest Be the Tie That Binds,'" rang out Don's voice above the hubbub.

All sang but Lorel. Yes, that was it, she told herself—the tie of Christian love. They had known each other so long—and you can't go on with the same crowd for years without feeling it deeply if one left. Her eyes fell on Alice Bently. There was no sadness in Alice's face, but a look of expectance as her glance darted to the corner where Len sat.

The crowd lingered until those who would have spoiled the fun—the extremely young and the not so young and the girl who had to be home by ten—had departed.

"Come on, let's go," and before Lorel could help it, Glen Hubbard was at her side, piloting her to the Sugar Bowl.

Never before had she felt such annoyance with Glen's preemption. She was suddenly in ill humor and wanted to refuse, but Glen seemed entirely unaware of her hostility.

Who was Don with? she wondered. And when Glen put her into a seat facing the rear of the room she could not even hear what he talked about, so absorbed was she in trying to answer that question. Her lips were dry, her laughter forced. Then, suddenly, in a mirror, she saw Don and Frank Lester at one of the center tables engaged in earnest conversation. Immediately it seemed as if a weight had fallen from her shoulders. He wasn't with a girl. He was alone! Well, that is, if you didn't count Frank, and Lorel didn't.

Watching the mirror, Lorel did not once see Don look toward her, or notice her in any way. It irked her, somehow.

So she assumed a spirit of gayety, and laughed and talked with Glen as if he were the only one in all the world in whom she was interested.

II

As GLEN joined the boys grouped about the cashier, Lorel sauntered toward the door. Suddenly it was opened, and Don, who had been waiting outside, gently but firmly seized her and rushed her around the corner and down the street in a direction away from her home.

"Why, Don Coever," she exclaimed when she had caught her breath, "who do you think you are? Lochinvar?"

He laughed. "Gosh, Lorel, I couldn't let Glen take you home tonight. Don't you realize that I'm going away for the summer, and I won't be seeing you at all? If Glen had taken you home tonight, he'd probably have got you dated for the picnic. I hate that fellow, anyway."

Lorel, knowing the power of the green-eyed monster, said, while watching from the corners of her eyes, "Oh, I don't know; I think he's nice. I suppose I'll see a great deal of him this summer."

She saw Don wince. "Think I'll give up this trip. Don't see what I have to go up there for anyway."

"Do you have to go?"

"Well, Dad thinks I ought to go, because this will be my last free summer. After I get into the office next fall long vacations will be out. You see, it's my mother's sister and her family, who live up in Wisconsin. They want me to come to get acquainted with them. I haven't seen them since my mother died. I was only seven then. I suppose my mother would want me to go, too. Of course, I want to, in a way, but—"

"Maybe they've got a girl up there they want you to meet." Lorel realized immediately that it was a tell-tale thing to say,

and flushed. Would Don know it was real fear that clutched her heart?

Although Don laughed and dismissed the remark lightly, it had given him hope. He had noticed the little catch in her voice and her flush. It was the only intimation he had ever had that Lorel liked him at all. But for him there would never be any one else. He had known he loved her ever since the valentine party Gay had given. They had been paired off when he drew a red ribbon from the little bowl of colored ribbons and Lorel drew from folded papers this advice, "Take the one with bow of red, for he's the one you're sure to wed."

As Lorel, smiling shyly, had walked across the room to him that night, he had realized how desirable she was. Silently they had stood together, laughing at the others as one by one partners were found. From their slips of paper the girls had read such verses as, "Take the one with bow of blue, for to you he will be true," or "Take the one with bow of green, for with you he will be seen," or "Take the one with bow of yellow, for he wants to be your fellow." What an evening it had been!

From that night on it had been agony for him whenever someone else had taken Lorel home, or escorted her to the various social functions, and joy unspeakable when the privilege had been his.

"For he's the one you're sure to wed" kept ringing in his ears. But he had to graduate from U first. That event would take place in just a few short weeks now. But he would first have to start work—start earning money—before he could dare ask Lorel to be his wife. And now this vacation would postpone that longed-for time. And what if someone else should win her in his absence?

Because of this fear, Lorel's little remark concerning another girl meant much to him. For love finds a way to give strength to straws. And in each word and look of the beloved the lover thinks he finds depths of meaning to his own advantage.

Walking slowly down the lilac-scented street—for Don had decided to pick up his car after seeing Lorel home—she

hoped desperately that he had attached no significance to her remark. But he had read hope in it, and inwardly rejoiced.

"Maybe you'll like the farm so well you'll decide to stay there."

"Hardly. I can't imagine a duller life. It'll be fun for a month or two, but I'll be glad to get back to gayety and dear old Chi. It's going to be awfully monotonous in the country. What do they do for amusement?"

"They have taffy pulls and square dances and such things."

They had reached her home. Through the window shone the light from a single lamp. Radio music drifted softly down to them. A summer breeze fanned their cheeks, but failed to cool them. For within each of them a strangely sweet sensation took possession, keeping their cheeks rosy and warm.

"I'm going to miss you awfully, Lorel."

Leaning against a huge tree, she kept her head lowered, occupying herself twisting her ring around and around her finger.

Suddenly Don stepped closer, and prevented further pre-occupation by taking one of her hands in each of his. Still she did not raise her head.

"Look at me, Lorel," he commanded softly.

With her heart racing, it took all the courage she possessed to lift her face to his. When she did, she found his own eyes and lips so close she caught her breath.

A fraction of an inch away from hers, Don's lips murmured, "Lorel—you're irresistible." Then the fraction of an inch vanished, and for one breathless moment their lips met. Firmly then Lorel forced him away, and ran up the steps swiftly, calling, "Good night, Don."

And just loud enough for her to hear came his "Good night, dear."

Very softly Lorel entered her home and went upstairs to her own room and locked herself in. She could not—she could not see anyone now. Her heart was pounding deliciously, and she knew her eyes were shining. She walked to the mirror and stared at herself. Shining eyes! Why, they were like twin diamonds caught in the sun!

"Oh, I'm glad it was dark," she whispered. "If he had seen me, he would have known that I love him."

The whispered words startled her. She had not known it herself, before this. But it was an exultant thought!

Later, stepping into the up-stairs hall, she called down, trying not to show the gladness in her voice, "Did you know I'm home, Mommy?"

"Why, no. Is everything all right?"

"Yes, of course. I'm rather tired, though; so I came right up. I'm ready for bed now. Good night, you two."

"Good night, dear," from her mother, and "Sleep tight," from her dad.

Reentering her own lovely room, with its golden walls and rich dark-brown walnut furniture, she was glad of the sweet privacy it afforded her. An exquisite sense of well-being overwhelmed her.

Putting out the light, she walked to the window and looked out into the vastness of the starlit sky. She laughed softly. "Is everything all right? Well, I should say."

Then luxuriously stretching out between the cool, crisp sheets, her cheeks still burning, her eyes still shining, she whispered joyously, "Oh, it's lovely to be nineteen—and irresistible!"

III

FOR Lorel, the next day was one of varied emotions. Her heart was bursting with song. In delightful anticipation she looked forward to that night when the crowd would meet at Community Cottage for their monthly party. The cottage was a low, rambling building that the Improvement Club of that vicinity had purchased and remodeled that it might be used by the neighbors for social functions. The grown-ups used it for political meetings, P.T.A. affairs, and parties of all descriptions. The children had many a good time there, and

once every month it was entirely at the disposal of the young people. Nothing short of dire necessity ever kept any of the crowd away from this gala affair.

Almost always before, Lorel had gone to Community Cottage with the girls, and paired off with someone after arriving. Most of the girls did this, for it was a very informal gathering. But, surely, after last night, Don would call her and ask to take her there, that he might be certain of the privilege of seeing her home. That, Lorel decided, would be more dignified. They were old enough now to observe and abide by conventions. Propriety would be preferable to informality, especially if it meant more time with Don. So reasoned Lorel.

Rather unsuccessfully, she tried to conceal her excitement when the phone rang. It was Glen, demanding an explanation as to her disappearance the previous night, and asking, as solace, her company that night.

Regretfully by word, but gayly in tone, Lorel refused his invitation. Glen cautioned her that he would not go at all unless he went with her. She still refused.

Later Gay called, and still later, Opal. Each time Lorel was more intensely disappointed. When late afternoon had come, and still Don had not called, her expectancy turned to chagrin, and still later her chagrin to resentment. It must have been the force of springtime that had so effected her! Don Coever didn't mean a thing to her! She'd show him. Why, she'd do a thing she had never done before. She'd call up a boy—Glen—and tell him that he could take her to the party!

Would he guess her reason? Would he suspect the disappointment in her heart? She was sure he wouldn't. Glen was entirely too confident of Glen's attraction ever to dream he was taking second place.

While Mr. and Mrs. Mason were in the garden, Lorel cautiously called Glen. His mother answered the phone, asking who it was before she called him. Lorel was mortified. She hated Glen, and hated his mother, and, above all, she hated Don for bringing this situation upon her. Mrs. Hubbard, however, was very gracious, asking while waiting for Glen as

to the health of Lorel's parents. Lorel rose to the occasion and just as graciously informed her, asking regally in return as to her own state.

Mrs. Hubbard at the other end of the wire was duly impressed with Lorel's suavity and would have been greatly astonished if she could have seen Lorel, tightly grasping the receiver with a belligerent glint in her eye, and a most repugnant facial expression which utterly belied the sweet, "Thank you so much, Mrs. Hubbard."

Then Glen, "Hello, Lorel. What's on your mind?"

"Why, Glen, I've just been wondering if you meant what you said. I'd hate to have you miss the party tonight. I want you to promise me you'll be there. I was mean last night, and I'm sorry."

She pictured perfectly and correctly Glen's straightening of his shoulders and pursing of his lips before they curved into a pleased smile. "Of course I meant it. I won't go unless I go with you—and come home with you."

"You baby!" she laughed into the phone, but grimaced into the hall mirror, "I suppose you'll have to have your way."

"You bet I will! I'll be there at eight."

Now, if only Don would call. She'd show him! If for one minute he thought that he meant anything to her!

Out on the veranda, Mrs. Mason was somewhat surprised at eight o'clock to see Glen emerge from his father's beautiful new car and come up the walk. She had distinctly heard Lorel refuse to go with him. Was this presumption on Glen's part?

"Good evening, Mrs. Mason and Mr. Mason. Lorel is expecting me, isn't she?"

They acknowledged his greeting, and Mrs. Mason went to call Lorel. "Lorel, are you expecting Glen?"

"Yes, Mom. I'll be there in a minute."

Mrs. Mason was puzzled for a moment, and then putting together, the stealthy entrance up to her room last night, the brightness of Lorel's eyes that morning, her lack of appetite, her sudden starts when the phone rang during the day, her very casual mention of Don bringing her home the night before, and the tiny trace of ill will at the dinner table, she

summed it all up more or less correctly. But, being a most wise mother, she refrained from saying a word, and smiled amusedly, although she felt a little ache in her own heart. For she knew exactly the malady that caused such symptoms. She sighed a little for the baby that was grown up, and fervently hoped that Lorel's interest was of the fluxing type rather than the perpetual. Her baby! Having heartaches and keeping them to herself! Well, she'd stay out of bounds, and let Lorel fight this thing out alone.

Her mother, forewarned, noticed Lorel's forced gayety as she joined them. "The new car, Glen! How spiffy of your dad!"

"It was mother. She insisted Dad let me have it after you called." Lorel bit her lip, as she glanced quickly at her mother.. Her mother, however, seemed entirely oblivious of that remark, completely absorbed in waving to Mrs. Jackson, across the way.

"Bye, Dad." She threw him a kiss. "Bye, Mother."

Mrs. Mason noticed that Lorel clung to her a little. "Have a nice time, darling," she almost pleaded, as she freed herself from Lorel's embrace. As she watched the pair walk down to the car, she felt as she imagined a mother bird feels when she pushes the birdlings out of the nest.

A contented purr and the car was off.

"A handsome pair, that," commented Mr. Mason.

Mrs. Mason shook her head.

"You don't think so?"

- "Not at all! Lorel's too-too"—gropingly—"precious for him."

"She's too precious for anybody, of course. But I want to put my trust in the man of Lorel's choice, just as your mother and father did in me, Anne, when I felt so unworthy of it. I believe we've trained Lorel well, and that's why I'm sure her choice will be safe."

"I agree with you, Warren, and that's why I can say I don't think so much of Glen Hubbard. I can't tell why, other than that I know Lorel doesn't."

"Good! Then she must be heart free. I'm glad to know it. She's still so young."

In the car Glen wanted to know if he could have every other dance with Lorel.

"Of course not! They'd think we were engaged," was Lorel's answer.

"Well, that wouldn't be so bad, would it?"

"It would be awful!" Lorel retorted, with more vehemence than she realized.

Glen grinned sheepishly. "That's the most unreserved refusal I've ever had." They both laughed gayly.

That night was torture for Lorel. For every time the door opened, she pretended deep interest in her immediate partner, so that in case it should be Don, he, seeing her, would suppose she was perfectly happy. But as the evening wore on, and Don did not appear, she became more and more bored and longed for the time to go home.

At long last, Lorel and Glen found themselves driving through the stillness of the early morning alone, for each man had found his maid, and preferred to be alone with her, whether walking or driving. Quaint enough, when you consider that ten years before, the compulsion of such a situation would have drawn from the boys the expressive statement, "Oh, nuts!" and from the girls a disdainful, "Well, I should say not."

Lorel rested her head back on the cushion. As they stopped for a red light, Glen watched her. Her beauty, the firmness of her finely molded chin, the length of her lashes, the blackness of her hair enthralled him.

"Tired, dear?" he asked, swallowing hard. The green light gave the go signal, and as Glen again turned his attention to driving he didn't see the tiny tear that crept from beneath those silken lashes and slowly rolled down the curve of Lorel's cheek.

Lorel had been telling herself that she had been in love with love; that it was the newness of the situation, that it was being called "dear" that had thrilled her. And yet now, when Glen called her by that same endearment it left her untouched. It wasn't the name or the situation but Don she wanted. It was useless to deny the conviction of her heart. She missed him so much that her heart seemed to be an open

would. She loved him—she loved him; but she would never let him or any one else know it.

Opening her eyes, she saw that they were nearing her house. Placing her fingers on the door handle, she pressed the catch, holding the door shut until Glen had stopped the car. Then, before he knew what she was about, she opened the door and stepped out swiftly, saying as she did so, "Thanks for a nice time, Glen. I'll see you in Sunday school." Quickly she ran up the walk, up the stairs and into the house, while poor Glen sat as though petrified, with his mouth open, words having refused to form themselves.

"Oh, darn!" he finally ejaculated as he stepped on the starter and wonderingly went home.

IV

SUNDAY morning, Mrs. Mason noticed gratefully that Lorel ate the fluffy omelet set before her, although she seemed a little pale. She ate with her lesson book propped up before her.

"I can't imagine why I never think of studying this Sunday-school lesson until eight-thirty Sunday morning. Although I've been teaching for more than a year, I consistently forget all about my responsibility until it looms up before me just an hour away. Oh, well, I guess I'll get by," she said, closing the book.

"The girls seem to adore you. That should be a good barometer of your success as a teacher," said her mother, appeasingly.

"Coming to services?" Lorel asked as she left.

"Yes, I believe we'll be there."

The night before, Lorel had definitely made up her mind that Don Coever would be out of her life forever. And so it was with a distinct shock she heard the familiar toot of his horn and the favorite greeting, "Hi, Lo, going my way!"

As she turned and stood there that bright sunny Sunday morning, face to face with Don, the bottom seemed to drop from the earth. She was torn with conflicting emotions. It seemed an eternity since she had seen him, for so much had transpired within herself since then. Since she had experienced the splendor of new love, she had also known the anguish and turmoil of it. It was difficult to return to serenity.

But her resolve to disregard Don had been so firm that now, when she seemed incapable of thought, that resolve controlled her. "It's a grand day. I think I'd rather walk."

"Lorel, you're not angry with me because of Friday night, are you?"

Her steadfastness was melting away. Angry because of Friday night? How could she be? Couldn't he guess what his absence and silence had meant to her? Where had he been? Had his absence been unavoidable? She hadn't considered that. But she couldn't stand there forever. She stepped into the car and sat beside him. "Study your lesson?" she asked, prosaically.

"Where had he been? Where had he been? She wouldn't ask, but, oh, she wanted to know where he had been.

"What are you doing this afternoon, Lorel?"

"I guess I'll take a nap. I'm rather tired. Got home from the party quite late last night."

"All afternoon? I wanted to ask you to drive to the park. My cousin, my dad's nephew this time, came back with us from Aurora last night to spend a few days, and he's determined to view the lake front. He hails from South Dakota, where water is a scarcity, and he wants to see gallons of it at once, he said. I thought if you and Gay would join us we could make it a foursome."

Beautiful words! Charming phrases! "Back from Aurora!" So that's where he had been—with his dad to Aurora. "Spend the day *together!*" *Together! Together!* She allowed the delightful word to permeate every nook and cranny of her healing heart. It was like oil on a wound. There was no need to keep up a pretense of indifference. His silence had not been intended. He did not know the anguish she had known last night. He couldn't know the awfulness of it.

"You haven't got a date with Glen this evening, have you?"

Lorel revelled in the anxiety of his voice. "No, not a thing in the world to do. I'll take a little nap from one till two, and be fresh as a daisy for our afternoon rendezvous. Did you get the poetry in that statement?" she laughed.

"I sure did," enthused Don, "in the words and meaning, too."

"Did you want to pair me off with the dry cousin?"

"I did not! Gay is a charming girl, and just his type."

Suddenly the world again seemed a wonderful place to Lorel. As she taught her girls it didn't bother her at all that they gave her so little attention. Usually she continually interrupted the conversation of a twosome, talking, oh, so gayly, of dolls, or school, or clothes, finding these subjects ever so much more interesting than the lesson at hand. Today she allowed them to talk on, unmolested, devoting her teaching to the ones who for the time being had run out of conversational material.

She was glad when Sunday school was dismissed. She was glad when services were started. She sat obliquely in her seat up in the choir so that the clear outline of her profile would be visible to Don, who sat behind her and to her left. She was conscious of the fact that the morning sun, streaming in through the windows, lit up her beautiful hair, creating fascinating lights and shadows among the curls. She wouldn't dare look, but she hoped that Don was noticing. Don was. It was with utmost difficulty he tore his eyes from the girl he loved and gave his attention to the anthem the choir was to sing.

After the choir had sung, the pastor, Rev. Henry Daniels announced as his text, Matthew 7:13 and 14: "Enter ye in at the strait gate for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction and many there be that go in thereat. Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life and few there be that find it."

He brought to the attention of his hearers the fact that the vast majority of mankind went in one direction. It was only the aspiring few who entered the strait gate of endeavor and made of their lives something finer and nobler than the

throng did. These really found life. The mediocre multitude had mere existence. The sermon awoke within more than one the desire to accomplish something in life and it was hailed as a marvelous discourse.

It puzzled Don a little. He would not, of course, take issue with Rev. Daniels, eminent theologian that he was. Certainly, he must know more about the Bible than he, Don Coever, did. But what did this man, "*broad is the way that leadeth to destruction*"? Rev. Daniels had ignored that phrase. Surely, you wouldn't say that all the mediocre folk had reached destruction. And was it true that the millionaire, the doctor, the lawyer, the scientist—each having attained success in his chosen field—had found more in life than he himself had? Just now, with the prospect of an afternoon in the park with Lorel, he couldn't think of a happier fellow than he was. He wouldn't want to change places with the most successful lawyer, the most famous scientist, the greatest doctor, or the richest millionaire in all the world. Oh, well, perhaps Matthew, dissatisfied with his gains as tax collector, had written that in a moment of discouragement. But it was Jesus who had said it. Well, no wonder then. He surely had yearned after that which was noblest and best in life. Too bad it had had to end the way it did. In death—while He was yet so young. It mystified Don to think that the Son of God had been powerless to save Himself from the hand of the enemy. Don knew, of course, that the Modernists didn't believe He was the Son of God, except as all men are the sons of God. But so forcibly and sweetly and incessantly had it been told to him by his mother before his eighth birthday that he seemed to have no difficulty at all in accepting as fact this spiritual truth, even though it was beyond human comprehension.

The science professor would laugh at him for believing it. Nevertheless, he did believe it from the bottom of his heart. And every time he heard the precious Christmas story it brought back memories of the one who had loved him so long ago, loved him as no one else ever had since she went away. This memory made Lorel so precious to him, too. He liked to think that, some day, they would have their little

home, and, perhaps, a little boy, to whom Lorel would mean as much as his mother had meant to him.

And so, determined to be content that the sermon had awakened noble aspirations within him, he tried to dismiss its seeming discrepancies from his mind. He was too young, anyway, to concern himself with these questions.

"But Jesus was only twelve years old when he interested Himself in them."

So clearly was the thought thrust at him that he started, as though he had heard the sound of a voice. That thought made him uncomfortable, somehow. He had a guilty feeling. It was as if someone was accusing him of not reading his Bible often enough. He came to church half the nights of the week, and every Sunday morning. However, Sunday was the only time there was any preaching from the Bible. The other evenings were devoted to church matters. He hadn't realized this before. What was wrong with him today? He thought it ought to be different. The Bible seemed so comprehensive and its material of such urgency that it did appear strange that so little time was spent with it, even in church, the very place which was organized for the express purpose of preaching the word. But the very business of running a church took so much time that there was very little left for the real purpose of it. Devising socials, plays, bazaars, and other various means of money-making demanded so much time and effort that there was no opportunity left for prayer and Bible study. But when he was older, Don told himself, he would give more time to it. Again the voice, "But Jesus was only twelve years old."

Don shook himself, as if to shake off the dispiriting meditation with, "Oh well, He was the Son of God."

After the services, Lorel and Don informed Gay of their plan. Glad at the prospect, she pretended indifference. "Oh, I wanted to stay home and read this afternoon."

"Well, decide quickly. If you won't go, I'll ask one of the other girls."

This variation incited Gay to action. "Oh, I'll go."

And so they separated, looking forward to the afternoon in Lincoln Park.

As the car turned into Lake Shore Drive that afternoon, Lorel rose from her lounging position and turned her head to see the beauty of the lake. The waves, softly rolling onto the shore, the gulls flying easily above the blue of the water, and the grace of the sailboats as they left the harbor never failed to capture Lorel's attention.

"I love the lake, Don. I've lived in Chicago all of my life and yet every time I come upon it, it just does something to me. It's so, so—majestic! Every time I ride down the Drive I can hardly decide which way to look. On the west are these gorgeous apartments and these exclusive shops displaying gowns I never hope to wear, and on the east is Lake Michigan. The man-made things are alluring, and yet God wins every time. His creation never fails to fascinate me."

Don smiled. "Do I have that fascination?" he asked. "You know man is God's creation too."

"What a question," laughed Lorel, noncommittally. But inside her a sense of goodness glowed. She felt that her statement—and it was true—was in keeping with a Sunday drive. It was nice to mention God in this fashion and, as always, when she drew God into the conversation, she felt a little proud and had a feeling that God was smiling His appreciation and approval upon her. She supposed that in some way these little acknowledgments of His existence helped to bring her a little closer to heaven.

In the back seat, Ken and Gay were utterly silent. Ken, too, was impressed with the grandeur of earth and sea and sky. Gay watched him covertly as he sat forward and upright the better to see the scene. He was, indeed, a lovable chap, she thought. He had reddish brown hair that waved straight back from a rather high forehead, a triangular sort of a face, with brilliant gray eyes, a straight nose and an almost feminine mouth. Altogether, he was, well, just lovable, mused Gay. She couldn't think of another adjective to describe him. He was neither dignified nor impressive nor intellectual nor ordinary, nor anything else she could think of. It amused her a little to know that "lovable" kept creeping into her thoughts.

Now, for Gay the lake held little charm. Yet, from his rapt expression, she knew better than to pierce Ken's present train

of thought with words. Ken, undisturbed, continued to drink in the awe-inspiring scene until Don, at last, turned into the park to find a parking space.

Leaving the car, Ken's change from worshiper to commonplace awareness was so swift it amused and delighted Gay. After all, an escort whose mind is a million miles away from you isn't much fun.

And so the four of them walked through the park. Ken's eagerness to see everything kept him and Gay far ahead of Lorel and Don most of the time. They enjoyed the Zoo especially. They watched the seals as they expertly caught the fish the keepers threw to them. They listened in mock terror to the roar of the lions. They laughed at the antics of the monkeys and at the dignity of the gorilla as he carefully peeled the banana he was about to eat. He quelled their laughter with a steady gaze from his disdainful eyes that seemed to reprove them for knowing so little of etiquette. Shuddering, they went on to marvel at the whiteness and the beauty of the polar bears and to throw peanuts to them as they sat up and begged.

Weary at last, they sat down beside the pond and recalled their childhood days when the Ugly Duckling had been so dear to their hearts. They pretended now that the very swan sailing before them was the one who had once been the despised Ugly Duckling.

"I always cried when I read that story," Lorel remembered. And such a look of commiseration even then filled her eyes that Don involuntarily reached out his hand to hers and held it tight within his own. Immediately the contact was made both were very much aware of it. Lorel pretended to try to withdraw her hand, but Don tightened and kept his hold. At the command of Ken, who wanted to see the lake once more, Don and Lorel followed. As though it were very important to do, Don suggested they hold hands until they had reached the water. Lorel protested that the passers-by would notice, but Don disposed of her objection by promising that none should even know it. So, amid the crowds, he walked so close to her that the touching of their hands was not noticeable.

In secluded lanes they walked far apart swinging their hands together like children. The sudden appearance of an intruder always filled them with secret laughter because of the adroit steps it was necessary to take that their closeness might again conceal the fact that they were holding hands. Thus, they managed to reach the rocky shore without once having had to release their grasp.

They clambered over the perilously huge boulders of the breakwater, glad for any excuse that allowed them to touch one another. Don, with long vision, led Lorel to an especially high rock that necessitated his holding his arms out for her to jump into when they again reached the pavement. For a moment he held her close, thrilled with her nearness.

They were torn apart by Ken's voice, "Say, let's get something to eat. We're hungry and cold."

Guiltily, Lorel and Don joined them. "Where shall we go?"

"Is chop suey too provincial?" Ken wanted to know.

"Chop suey is modish," sang Gay.

So Don took them to an especially good place he knew of, along the North Shore. The conversation remained general, but underneath it all there was for Don and Lorel an undercurrent of strange and alluring joy.

After appropriating a cozy, secluded booth, the girls withdrew to make themselves presentable. They smoothed their curls, which had been crumpled by the wind, and refreshed themselves with warm water and scented soap, powder, and even perfume, which Gay had carried with her. She had just discovered it the day before and its name was "Illusive."

Lorel had supposed, as had Don, that she could never eat again. But the rich aroma of the Chinese cooking changed that opinion. Heartily and gratefully the four ate, exchanging among themselves chop suey for egg fou yung, and chow mein for lai yut. When, at last, young appetites were appeased, and they sat sipping the fragrant tea, "Illusive," which had been completely eclipsed, came into its own, and permeated and pleased the consciousness of Ken and Don. It had the desired effect upon Ken, who, well fed and warm, became suddenly aware of Gay's beauty. Up to this time she

had been merely his companion. Now he was conscious of her attraction.

Don, on the other hand, had needed no such thing as "Illusive" to lure his attention to Lorel. He could not, it seemed, tear his eyes away from her for more than a moment at a time. He gave the movie they attended afterward very little attention, but Lorel came from it with a feeling of depression. For it had portrayed the eternal triangle, and Lorel was filled with vague fears. Was that what marriage did—destroy this desire to be with the loved one? She wondered why that should be.

Because Gay's mother was not at home, and she had forgotten her key, Ken and Gay accompanied Lorel and Don to Lorel's home.

Mr. and Mrs. Mason, returning home, stopped outside the door to listen as the young voices rang out in song.

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want;
All I need, in Thee I find."

"It does sound lovelier than that raucous singing we heard tonight," said Mrs. Mason. "I wonder why the world doesn't want to hear it."

"Perhaps because they don't mean it," suggested Mr. Mason.

"Perhaps not. But neither do they mean, 'Yes, we have no bananas,' or 'Rosalie, my darling, Rosalie, my dream.' Ninety percent of them don't even know a Rosalie."

They laughed, and entered, to be wildly greeted and regaled with the events of the day.

With keen disappointment, Don had to bid Lorel good night in the presence of them all. When Ken heard him say he would call for Lorel for the picnic, Ken immediately wanted to know if he couldn't take Gay. He learned that she was going with Stanley, but Ken decided he would go, anyway. He was sure there would be some way to waylay Stanley, whoever he was.

Alone again in her room that night, Lorel's heart sang. For, all through the day, Don's every word and action had

convinced her of his love. She was almost sure that if Gay had not forgotten her key, the three golden words would have been hers to cherish, along with the fervor of his eyes.

V

THE picnic day dawned with a definite cloudiness. The morning sun just faintly pierced the heavy ceiling. It was windy and cool.

"Perhaps you had better postpone the picnic until next week," suggested Lorel's mother.

"Oh, no! We can do no more than get wet. A good storm may try our ingenuity. We need problems of that sort to fit us for life, you know, mother," Lorel added in mock seriousness.

"You do look stunning," said Mrs. Mason, "and I regret having to inform you you must wear a sweater."

"Oh, no!" again protested Lorel. "Why, Mommie, it will spoil everything!"

"Everything? How could it? What effect will it have on the birds or the beauty of the woodlands? And it surely won't spoil the delectable home-made cookies you are taking. Now, will it?"

Lorel flushed. "Well," she said, mischievously, "it might spoil my chances of capturing a husband. In fact, it will—a brown skirt, a green blouse, and my only wearable sweater a brilliant red!"

"I'm sure it will be your only obstacle, and, you know, Lorel, you need problems of that sort to fit you for life."

Lorel laughed and hugged her mother. "Mother, it is a constant perplexity to me how I retain my diffidence, with you and Dad so incessantly commending me." Her mother laughed with her at her pedantry, and Lorel added, "I'll have to remember that one to astonish my English teacher with."

"You must forgive us our failing. We look at you through

the rose-colored glasses of parental love. And now, there's a package for you on my dresser. Will you get it?"

Lorel returned quickly, tearing the wrappings from the package. She uncovered the box, to find inside a twin-sweater set, the color of buttercups and trimmed in richest brown.

"Oh, Mummie, how lovely! How dear of you to think ahead and have this surprise for me. Let me try it on."

She returned, a lovelier vision than ever. The soft silken knit clung to her slender figure, and the merry swing skirt swung wide as she gayly pirouetted before her mother's admiring eyes.

"Well, well, what an exhibition of dancing autumn leaves to behold on this grand spring morning!"

Lorel, out of breath, stopped abruptly. "Oh, Dad," she greeted him, "I'm so happy. Don't ask me why. I don't know. I just am."

"It couldn't be," began Mr. Mason, a deep frown furrowing his forehead, indicative of deep and ponderous thought, "because a certain young man with brown eyes is calling to take you to the woods this morning, could it?"

"Well, it might be," conceded Lorel. Her twinkling eyes closed for a moment, and when they opened again all the mischief was gone.

"Dad," and he recognized the plea behind the question, "what do you think of Don Coever?"

He dismissed the light reply that would have come, and glanced a little uneasily at his wife. She was biting her lip. Was it true, then, this possibility that they had discussed long into the night? Was their darling thinking seriously of Don? Had their friendship developed into a deeper regard? With hearts not quite sure, they had reassured one another that he was a fine lad; that if this was the case, they believed he was worthy, or almost worthy, of their precious daughter's love and faith. Of course, no one could ever be quite good enough.

So the answer came: "I think he is splendid, Lorel. I would be proud to have him for my son. And so would mother."

Lorel caught her breath. Did that remark contain the meaning it implied? Or was this praise a mere figure of

speech. All were quiet. Then Lorel restored the old footing of lovable teasing and gay comradeship by saying, "Come on, Dad, you old slow-poke and start on your orange juice."

At eight-thirty Don came. He, too, wore a slip-over sweater of yellow and brown. The two dark heads above faces glowing with health and happiness were gloriously complimented by the deep yellow of their sweaters and the softening brown touches.

"Why, we're twins!" observed Lorel, delightedly.

But Don corrected her. "We're closer than that."

A number of the young people were already gathered at the church. Opal greeted them with matter-of-fact questions. "Where is Gay? Didn't you call for her? Do you know how many are coming? Shall we leave promptly at nine, or do you think we'll have to wait for the inevitable stragglers?" Then, more brightly, "I brought the weenies, Don; and Glen brought the buns. They're in the basement. I brought piccalilli, too; and coffee and canned cream. Oh, are these cookies, Lorel? Thanks."

"You're a bundle of efficiency, Opal. What would we do without you?" laughed Don. "The rest of us are so scatter-brained."

Opal flushed at his praise. "I like everything to be done decently and in order. I detest confusion, emotion, and all other 'shuns.'"

For a moment, the sun came out brightly and all the crowd cheered it. By nine they were ready to start, for all were present. Don helped Opal divide the packages that were to be carried by the boys. The older girls, who well knew they would spend the day together, started off. A few other couples, among them Stanley and Gay, followed. Some of the girls found this and that excuse to linger, still hoping one of the boys might suddenly decide that she was his desire for that day.

As Lo waited for Don, Glen came to her. Taking her hand, he commenced pulling her down the street with him. Just then, Don, emerging from the basement, witnessed the sight. Tripping in his hurry to rectify it, he dropped his package, which split open and dumped on the ground some two

pounds of weenies. At the shout of laughter which arose, the hikers turned about, and the nearest of them came back to join in the fun. Opal knew where there was another shopping bag and hurried to get it, while Don obviously and firmly separated Glen and Lo with the remark, "Lo's my girl, and you leave her alone."

From that time on there was no hope of escaping the railery of the crowd. Every incident, every event, every observance, called for some sort of remark regarding Don and Lo.

"To save time," suggested Ben, "why not call them 'Donlo'?"

"A good ideal"

Glen said, sulkily, "I think 'Lodon' would be better. That's what he is, anyway."

Lorel and Don, conscious of each remark, secretly enjoyed the coupling of their names together. But they pretended displeasure.

Ken slipped from one group to another, casting longing eyes toward Gay, who was with Stanley. Suddenly he hurried to Gay's side and said, "I want to be different. Most of the fellows have two girls. I want to be one of two escorts."

"Well, supposing I don't," said Stanley, glaring at his rival.

"Then you can leave," retorted Ken. And so, amid chilly glances from Stan and warm ones from Gay, Ken at last found his desired place.

They reached the forest preserve at about eleven o'clock. They tossed their packages down, close beside one of the outdoor fireplaces provided for the convenience of picnickers. The boys stretched full length on the green grass, while the girls, more decorously sat up, using their arms as back rests by holding their palms tight against the ground behind them.

"The boys always get the best of it," observed Gay, wrinkling her nose at them. Each boy had to admit that his position was much the more comfortable. After a short rest, pangs of hunger animated them. For a time, the activities resembled an ant hill. Some scurried off for firewood and some for buckets of water from the pump. One group made coffee. Others found twigs long and strong enough to skewer weenies to be roasted over the open fire.

They ate hungrily, and Opal was hailed as a heroine for thinking of piccalilli. With hunger appeased, they would have romped away if it had not been for Opal, who insisted that order be restored to her satisfaction before any games were begun. At last they were free. They played last couple out, tag, farmer in the dell, ball, and even drop the handkerchief, when, at last, weary limbs refused to do anything more strenuous. Finally, a number of girls dropped out from even that, completely exhausted. Presently, the rest joined them, and they engaged in games requiring mental skill rather than physical endurance.

Lorel and Don, and Gay with Ken, who by stubborn tenacity had finally driven Stan off to the side of Elaine, stole quietly away and wandered down the winding paths to find seats beside the river. The conversation was trivial, and yet, beneath it all, Lorel recognized the tenseness of Don's attitude. Just the touch of their hands, the meeting of their eyes were filled with exquisite import for each of them.

Lazily, they sat there, until from the darkening sky a drop of rain fell on Gay's nose. The day had been sunny and cloudy by turn, but now the cloudiness grew deeper and the rain began to fall in earnest, while the day turned to night in a moment. Laughingly, they stumbled toward shelter. A roll of thunder following them seemed to threaten them with disaster.

By a great shout from all the company, to whom they were revealed in a flash of lightning, the foursome found the others safely ensconced in the shelter of the large stone pavilion provided for just such an emergency. There were walls on only two of its sides. Fortunately, the rain came from the south and sprinkled only one wall. A huge fireplace was built in each wall. They learned from the others that Opal had rounded them up about a half hour before the rain and compelled them to carry firewood and the food and ware for their supper into this place of shelter. Despite their protests, she had insisted that the rain would come soon.

"Now, there's a girl who would make a good wife for someone. Nothing would ever go wrong in her house. Not ever."

Don's answer to Lorel was drowned in a peal of thunder.

Some of the girls screamed, and all of them shivered. It was much colder. But, under Opal's direction, the boys soon had a roaring fire in the great stone fireplace. In its light each girl's beauty was enhanced, and all the boys looked like heroes in tales of old.

They were entirely alone here. All the other picnickers sensibly had hurried for cars and home much earlier.

Steaming coffee was accepted gratefully by all. The sandwiches which the girls had prepared at home, and which were much more delicate than the thick hot-dog buns of the afternoon, disappeared as if by magic. Lorel's cookies were devoured eagerly, and then the marshmallows were roasted and eaten just as greedily. Popular songs were sung and the voices rang out through the rain-pelted darkness.

Gradually, the clouds lifted. The sky grew brighter, and the rain fell more desultorily. When it ceased entirely, the sun came out to shine down upon them as unashamedly as though it had never deserted them for a moment.

The trees, the grass, and the shrubbery glistened in the sunlight, as though proud of the new beauty the rain had given them. As Lorel noted their fresh loveliness, she could not help but compare them with the human beings. Surely, the downpour had been less kind to them. Dresses and slacks and shirts were wrinkled and soiled. In many cases hair was despoiled of curls and hung in sorry streaks. But the leaves, with their diamond raindrops, were at their best.

Simultaneously, it seemed, each one's attention was directed to his or her own appearance, for, upon looking about, each one hoped against hope that he or she had weathered the storm more advantageously than the others. Gay, joining Lorel and Don, laughed.

"How do I look?" Well she knew. The white linen sport dress that that morning had shone in smooth starched loveliness now hung limply, as though tired of the outing. Her hair, in wild disarray, was too kinky, because of the newly-bought permanent and the dampness.

"Do you really want me to tell you?"

"No! I'd rather not know."

"Well, you look good to me," defended Ken.

"Come on, pump for me, Ken. After I douse my head with water and comb my hair, I'll amaze you with my beauty." Off they went.

"They all look pretty frowzy, Lorel," smiled Don,— "all but you. Rain just makes your hair prettier, doesn't it?"

"Oh, that's just prejudice. Many men, like little boys, always think that their possessions are the best."

"Their possessions? Are you mine?"

"For the day," Lorel explained shortly. But her cheeks were pink.

The ever imperative voice of Opal reached them. "Come on, now. We must start for home. That sun is sinking rapidly, and we must get to the concrete before dark, so we won't have to plow blindly through this mud. Take the packages, boys, and get going."

"Here, Don, you take the coffee pot." Then, looking from him to Lorel and back again, "No, you needn't carry a thing. You've done your share. Get started, you two, before someone notices what a softy I am."

"Gee, you're a good egg, Opal," commended Don appreciatively, if somewhat ineloquently. He hastily took her advice, and pulled Lorel along with him toward the safety of the concrete. They had to step with swift and uneven steps in order to evade the little puddles beneath their feet.

"I'll bet they're just as anxious that we don't step in them as we are," observed Lorel, regarding the puddles.

Don laughed, and in sheer delight drew her arm through his. He enclosed her soft white hand within his large brown one. "You say the cutest things, Lorel." They hurried along arm in arm, although this yoke made avoiding the puddles even more difficult. They were the first to reach solid ground.

Opal had them all rounded up and started. Following the younger ones, she joined the group of "past hopes," as the younger boys called them. Of course, if the truth were known, neither Opal nor her companions desired to keep up the merriment of the day. They were tired and preferred to talk quietly and sensibly, really enjoying their own company far above that of the giggly group ahead.

Slowly, the great golden ball that was the sun sank in the

west. After its disappearance, twilight lingered as long as it dared, and then at last acknowledged defeat, and, following the sun, gave the night up to darkness.

As Lorel and Don, who were leading the procession, came abreast of a huge cottonwood tree, Don nimbly drew her behind it. He touched his finger to her lips before she could say a word, and there they quietly stood as, one after the other, the twosomes and threesomes passed them by, unaware of their proximity.

At last, they heard Opal's voice in enjoyable discussion: "Oh, I don't think you could keep a group of young people interested in the church without allowing them any worldly pleasures. I'd abhor such a doctrine. My cousins"—the voice faded in the distance.

They waited a little longer and then came from their retreat, following at a safe distance, where, though still belonging with the crowd, they were alone.

"Are you tired, Lorel?"

"Not very. Are you?"

"No."

A half block was covered in silence.

"Why the merry laughter?" Lorel asked at last.

"Lo, I'll be leaving in two weeks."

She hoped he could not hear the beating of her heart. To her it seemed as loud as drums. She made no reply.

"Will you miss me?"

"Yes."

Another long silence. Then, impetuously and with fervor, Don spoke. "Lorel, I love you. I love you so much that I want to ask you to be my wife. But how can I? I'm not even in business yet. But, Lorel, how can I go away for the entire summer without telling you this? Someone else might win you while I'm gone. If I knew you cared—if I knew you—you—loved me too, and would be—well, would be willing to marry me later, I, oh, Lorel," he finished pleadingly, "could you ever care enough about me to marry me?"

Somehow, all through the day, Lorel had known that this was to be the great day. In her room she still kept one of those old-fashioned pictures portraying the happiest moments

in a girl's life. Although the fashions were old, ever since she had been a little girl she had loved that picture and had often studied it, wondering when, if ever, those moments would become realities in her own life. The first was captioned "The Proposal." And today—this May day with its sunshine and shadow—had brought to her this, her first happiest moment. Suddenly, all fear and awe left her. It seemed so natural—the very thing that should happen. She answered sincerely, "I'm sure I could, Don."

"You could, Lorel? You mean you will?"

"Yes. I love you too, Don. I think we would be very happy."

"Oh, Lorel." Don stopped short and looked for a place in which he could draw her again, that he might kiss her. She understood his move and laughingly shook her head. "We're on the boulevard now, and there are too many lights. You'll have to wait until we get home."

"Well, I won't," he replied with determination, and at the same moment hailed a cruising cab.

"Don, we can't do this. The others will worry about us," Lorel protested, even as Don put her into the cab. But he told the driver to slow up when they came abreast of the walking crowd.

He sat forward in his seat until they had caught up with them, and then called out, "Lorel and I are tired. We're taking a chariot. Good-by."

As a few of the hikers rushed toward the taxi with groans, he gave the order, "Step on it."

Then his arms drew Lorel close and their lips met. "I can hardly believe it, Lorel. I'm not good enough for you." Then, with further concern, "Do you suppose your mother and father will object?"

"We'll ask them when we get home, but I don't think so, Don. They both think a lot of you. Dad told me so only this morning."

"He did? That's great! What did he say?"

"Oh, I don't remember exactly, but I gathered that he thought you were pretty fine."

"I'm glad he thinks so. Maybe I have been sort of, well,

incompetent, in the past. But from now on I'm going to make every day count. I wish I didn't have to take this vacation. I want to start working right away."

Lorel laughed. "You said," she reminded him, "that you would be willing to go, if you knew I'd be yours when you came back."

"Did I say that? Well, that's what I thought, but, now, how on earth will I endure the summer away from you? Lorel"—admonishingly—"you'll remember that you belong to me while I'm gone. Say, I'll get your ring tomorrow. Do you want to come with me and choose it?"

"You needn't get a ring, Don."

"Well, I guess I do! I'm going to let that bunch of pirates, especially Glen Hubbard, know you belong to me."

"Well, then, you choose it. I know it will be just what I want."

The drive was completed in happy silence, with Lorel's head resting on Don's shoulder, and his, in turn, against the softness of her midnight hair.

Mr. and Mrs. Mason looked up from their reading, to behold the two standing before them with starry eyes. Words would have been unnecessary. It seemed cruel to subject Don to the ordeal of finding some that were suitable. However, Mr. Mason, remembering his own experience, knew that after it was all over Don would be proud of the courage it had necessitated. So he allowed Don to speak.

"Mr. and Mrs. Mason," he began, haltingly, "I—I—that is, I love Lorel, and she loves me too, and we—I was wondering if you—if you would trust her to me."

It was gallantly spoken, all things considered. While Lorel flung herself into her mother's arms, Mr. Mason took Don's hand in his. "I believe we will, Don. You'll promise, of course, to cherish and care for her all the days of your life?"

"Yes, sir, Mr. Mason. I'll do everything I can to make her happy."

Then Mrs. Mason came to Don and took his face between her hands and kissed him, the while she stood on her toes.

Lorel laughed. "Why, Don, your arms don't hang down

so helplessly when you kiss me." And then she blushed at her own admission.

Don was moved more than any of them realized. To them such displays of affection were common, but Don had never known them. "Well," he replied, shakily, "you're not so devastating. Your mother kissed me without fair warning. Didn't you, Mrs. Mason?"

"Mrs. Mason? That seems rather formal. Would you like to call me Mother, Don?"

"Yes, I would. It'll make me feel that I belong to you, and to"—he looked at Mr. Mason, inquiringly, then finished as he saw the nod of approval from Mr. Mason—"to you and Dad."

After a proper period of time, during which Lorel and Don amused their elders with the events of the day, "Mother and Dad" retired.

"Oh, Lorel, weren't they swell about it?"

"Mm—hmm. Especially when you consider the exalted opinion they have of me. It only proves how much they think of you, Donny. I assure you, you have to be pretty good to win so cordial a welcome." She spoke in jest, and was astounded at Don's fervor.

"Oh, don't think I don't realize how unworthy I am of you, Lorel. I am deeply grateful to be so generously accepted as one of the family. It has been the desire of my heart for years to belong to someone—to have someone belong to me. I can hardly believe that that desire should be filled in so wonderful a person as you. For you, Lorel, are the sweetest, the dearest, the most marvelous girl in all the world."

Now, never before had Lorel thought of herself as being quite so remarkable, but Don spoke so convincingly, and it was so sweet to hear such unreserved praise, that she snuggled close and found it easy to believe him.

VI

THE following two weeks were filled with new and jubilant experiences for both Lorel and Don. When Lorel wore the gorgeous diamond Don gave her to Young Peoples bedlam broke loose. For, until the day of the picnic, no one had even dreamed that these two were "serious."

Poor Glen! Considering the astonishment and ache in his heart, he behaved exceedingly well. And, on hearing the news, more than one girl, with a little sigh, looked about mentally to find a new object on whom she might place her affection. But, altogether, there was a spirit of good will and gayety, and, of course, much teasing.

To hide his keen disappointment, Glen suggested that the following night be one of celebration. As Don was leaving them for almost the entire summer, they would make it a gala affair. A combined farewell and engagement party must needs be something special. They decided that Glen should make reservations for them at the Klickety Klack Klub.

What excitement prevailed! It would be a couple affair, of course. How skillfully the girls angled for invitations! For each one knew that, unless she succeeded in focusing the attention of some young man upon her individual charm, it would be her sad fate to miss this exciting event. The various methods used to accomplish their end were most amusing and would have afforded droll entertainment if there had been anyone there not too preoccupied to notice it.

Even though the girls were in the majority, not all of them needed the use of their wits to get an invitation. This was most provoking to the rest of the girls, who wondered how some managed to get double invitations without even trying, as Gay, for instance.

Stanley and Ken each reached her side at the same moment, and they almost bumped their heads together in the effort to gain her attention and her acceptance. Gay, quick witted, seemingly made a logical decision. "Well, Ken is Don's cousin and he will be here only a short time," she answered Stanley. "As it is Don's party, I suppose I ought to do the

polite thing and go with him. You won't mind, will you, Stan? It does seem the conventional thing to do."

He had been accepted with such urbanity that Ken felt a little bewildered. He was delighted that Gay was going with him, but her smooth explanation to Stanley made him wonder if he had gained much of a victory. In short, had Gay accepted him merely "because it was the conventional thing to do"?

"Hang conventions!" grunted Stanley, and to the surprise of every one, including himself, he asked Opal to go with him. Although no one knew it but Opal herself, stratagem had led him to it. After having observed this tête-à-tête, she had deliberately arranged matters so that as soon as Stanley turned from Gay he would run into her. Suspecting the attitude of the spurned male, she had suggested with a radiant smile, "Won't it be fun, Stanley?"

Stanley had reacted just as she had hoped and had asked without thinking, "Will you go with me?"

Complacently, Opal gloated that her plan had succeeded. It was the first time she had managed by her ingenuity so romantic an affair as a date with a boy, and she reveled in her success. It was not because she cared one whit for Stanley, or for any other boy there, but because she did want to go to that party. And if the only way to get there was to lure one of them to invite her, lure one she would.

With difficulty, Don quieted the young people, and started the meeting. It was devotional night. When they finally realized this, they did their level best to dispose their minds in the attitude they felt was appropriate for devotion to God. After they had sung a few hymns, most of them had succeeded. Now and then, however, as the eyes of one would meet the eyes of another, both pairs of eyes would light up with gay expectation. Alice Bentley, who had been claimed by Leonard as his partner for the following evening, could not get a devout look into her eyes at all, no matter how hard she tried. She was just learning the sweetness of being one of the "includeds." It was all that she had dreamed it would be, those many times when she, with the other "unincludeds," had assumed a "don't care" attitude as they had walked home

alone with aching hearts, but with gay voices, planning some excursion of their own.

Lorel's happiness knew no bounds. Every now and then, Don smiled at her from his seat in the front. She knew that not one adoring glance was missed by the rest of the girls, and she exulted in his adoration. She knew she was envied by most of them. She sang the songs of praise happily, but, if the truth were told, it was merely as an outlet for her own overflowing heart. She was scarcely conscious of the words she sang.

She read the article, which was about tolerance, with alacrity. A bubbling heart gave depth and resonance to her voice. She read it well, knowing all the while that the listeners were more absorbed in the reader than in what was read.

So devotional night progressed, being devotional in name only. For, although outwardly all appearance of festivity was banished from the thoughts of the young people, in their hearts plans for feasting and merrymaking held first place.

Don read a portion of the Sermon on the Mount, and suggested to each of them a better life and nobler aspirations. Again they read one of the formal prayers printed in the back of the hymn book.

They closed by singing "I Love to Tell the Story." This was one of their favorite songs. Then, freed from the bondage of devotional etiquette, they gave way to pandemonium. "What will you wear?" "Meet me at two, and we'll go to Janet's to have our hair done." "I'm going to insist that Mother let me get that little bemberg sheer in dusty rose I saw at Kingston's last week." Remarks such as these filled the room.

Because of their self-concentration, Don was able to slip out unnoticed with Lorel. Almost reverently, he walked with her. He recognized the quality of his feeling and spoke of it.

"You know, Lorel, I feel that I worship you almost more than I do God. It may be wrong, but you are so near and so real. God seems awfully far away. If it weren't for my mother's early teaching, I'm afraid I might begin to doubt His existence."

"Oh, you ought not say that, Don."

"Well, does God seem very real to you? Does He, honestly, Lorel?"

"Oh, I think God is too important to bother much about us, Don. After all, who are we that He should—well, associate with us?" Lorel felt a sort of pride in her humility.

"I don't know, but I wish we had some evidence of His reality. I don't mean that exactly, either. But I would like some assurance that He is conscious of us, that He is interested in us."

"That is the modernist's argument. If we don't know Him, why accept His existence as fact? Why believe what our parents have taught us? It's old-fashioned, anyway. Let's be modern."

"I, for one, could never believe that there is no God. Every phase of life and nature proves to me that there is. The universe, the seasons, growing things, and even our own physical structure convince me of that. But I wish He were more attainable. I wish that hymn, 'What a Friend we have in Jesus' was true. Having Him for a friend would be wonderful."

Lorel tossed her head and began to hum, even before Don had finished speaking. It displeased her to think that Don would give so much thought to spiritual things while she was with him. Perhaps if she gave more attention to the old adage to keep him guessing, his interest in her wouldn't waver so.

Don, realizing that she had lost interest in the conversation, dismissed these disturbing thoughts with an effort. Once they were dismissed, however, Lorel again became the object of his thoughts, much to her satisfaction.

"I'm so happy, Lorel. I can hardly believe that out of all our crowd I'm the one to have won you. I suppose I've been thinking about God so much tonight because I'm so grateful to Him for having made you love me."

Lorel hoped fervently that Don wouldn't start on that subject again. "Why, He didn't do it, Don." Then, coyly, "You did it yourself."

"Well, how? I don't see anything attractive about me."

"Then you're the only one who doesn't. Why, I'm the envy of practically every girl in the crowd."

Don laughed, and held her hand tighter. From then on, until the final good night, the conversation embraced just the two of them. They went over the eternal question, "When did you first know?" To the amazement of Lorel it was as the valentine party. Then why did he take so and so to this affair, and why didn't she do this or that? And because they found in all the world nothing so delightful as themselves and their affairs, the walk took minutes longer than ever before, and it seemed as if they never could separate, so momentous were these questions and their answers.

It was these little talks and confidences that meant more to them than anything else. It seemed that they were the center of the universe; and that all other people, events, and affairs existed merely to supply the background for their own happiness. Even the memory of the merry supper dance held in their honor the following evening became more hazy to them than the words they spoke to one another. And that was not because the supper dance was not a great success. On the contrary, it was a huge success. And it lived long and vividly in the memory of the others.

In the two short weeks Lorel and Don had together one event was of tremendous importance to Lorel, and that was meeting Don's father. In response to Mr. and Mrs. Mason's invitation he came with Don to call on them on Sunday afternoon. Nervously, Lorel waited for them to come. Don had seldom spoken of his father. Mr. Coever had never attended church services or any of the social affairs. Because of Don's silence regarding his father, Lorel had imagined him to be aged and given to acrimony.

Her trepidation changed to amazement when they entered the room. For Mr. Coever was of splendid appearance and only in his late forties. After graciously acknowledging his introduction to Mr. and Mrs. Mason, he turned to face Lorel.

"And this is Lorel, Dad."

Mr. Coever took her extended hand in both of his and held it while he studied her. His evident admiration embarrassed Lorel a little. Then he said with a smile, "I'm glad to know

you, Lorel. I feel sure now that Don's effervescence regarding you is justified. I must confess I felt a great fear when this young man informed me he had chosen his bride to be. I have been so busy with things I still thought of him as being mainly occupied with bicycles and electric trains. When I realized he had attained to man's estate, I felt that I had failed him, especially in not knowing his friends and interests. But I can say truthfully, Lorel, even so shortly after meeting you, I am honored that you have accepted my son."

Although she was a little flustered, Lorel's reply was sincere. "I think Don is wonderful, Mr. Coever. Now I know why he is. He's like you."

Mr. Coever laughed heartily. "Well, listen to this little girl! If she weren't so superior herself, I'd say she captured my boy with honey."

Thus began a pleasing friendship between the Masons and Mr. Coever. He and Mr. Mason found themselves to be most congenial. At the first chance she had, Lorel teased Don, "No wonder you've kept him hidden. He's almost nicer than you."

Don flushed with pride. He and his father had shared very little of their lives with one another, and this new relationship gave him much joy.

They discussed Don's vacation and future. Mr. Coever spoke of his wife's relatives with unreserved praise. It would, no doubt, be difficult for these young people to be separated so soon after their new-found love, but Don would really have to go. His Aunt Beth had been pleading for some time that he come, and it would be most discourteous to refuse, especially as all arrangements had already been made. After that, Mr. Coever was planning on having Don enter his office, where he felt sure business success for Don was assured.

It was all very nice and informal, and as Lorel watched the interest in the faces of her mother and father, and noted the evident satisfaction they found in Mr. Coever's information, she smiled. Of course, one would not say they had met for the sole purpose of discovering what benefits might accrue from the union, and nothing so old-fashioned as a dower was mentioned. Yet Lorel knew that both her parents felt much

better to know that her choice had been one of such advantage. Satisfied as to Don's character, they would never have withheld the permission for her happiness, yet, nevertheless, she recognized their appreciation of his financial status.

VII

As DON drove off the highway and down the narrow road which led him to his aunt's home, a sense of peace enveloped him. There was something about the tranquillity of the scene that reached deep into his soul. Above him the lazy clouds drifted through the blue of the sky. The breeze brought varying pleasant odors to his nostrils. For a time he had to give his undivided attention to driving down the steep hill. He hadn't known that Wisconsin had so many hills this far south. After his safe descent, the landscape again held his attention. He wished fervently that Lorel were with him to enjoy it. This would be an ideal place for a honeymoon, he decided.

At the foot of the hill he made a U turn, and now, as he was traveling in the direction opposite to that which had brought him down, the hill itself was the background of the new view. Growing things were planted in terraces on the hillsides. Don loved the peacefulness of it.

Crossing a low bridge over a creek, Don caught his first view of the farm buildings. They were huge and well kept. Far back from the road, he glimpsed the white farmhouse. The house and its surroundings brought to him a sense of familiarity. He wondered at it, and then remembered the picture that had been given to him when he was a child by the corner grocer. The similarity between that picture and this reality was most striking. Shrubbery, fruit trees, a profusion of flowers, and the flagstone walk leading to the front steps were a counterpart of that precious picture. He smiled to think that so small a circumstance could make him feel

so much at home. Nevertheless, he appreciated it, for he had not seen any of these people with whom he was to spend the entire summer for almost fourteen years. He hoped desperately that they would be congenial.

His fears were allayed when he heard a childish voice cry out in glad excitement, "Here he is! Here he is!" Then a girl, who he judged must be Eunice, ran toward him and greeted him gayly, "Hello, Don."

Before he had finished shaking her outstretched hand, the rest of them had grouped about him, and now Paul said, "Welcome, Don. We've been waiting impatiently to see you for a long time.

"And so have I, to see you," answered Don untruthfully.

"And here is our mother," introduced Paul, and Don found himself looking into a pair of eyes much like the eyes he remembered of his mother. "I'm so glad to know you, Aunt Beth. You are like my mother. I wish I had come sooner." This time he spoke truthfully.

"And I wish you had too, Donald. I have longed for this day ever since Ruth went on to Glory. I'm sure she would want us to be well acquainted, for she loved both of us so much. And now here is Lois." Lois smiled her welcome, and Don experienced a feeling of pride that these charming girls were his cousins.

"Hadn't you better bring out your iced lemonade, Eunice, while Paul takes Don's bags to his room? Just wait, Donald, for a refreshing drink before you go up. If you would like to wash your hands, Paul will show you where; or, if you prefer, there is a bar of soap at the pump."

"I'll use that. It's a long time since I've enjoyed this outdoor life."

"Shall I pump for you?" asked Eunice. "It's kind of hard to pump and wash at the same time."

"That will be a big help," Don said; "but I won't miss that lemonade then, will I?"

"I'll have that ready for you," Lois replied.

"But I made it for you," interrupted Eunice.

They all laughed, and Don felt that he belonged there. As they sat on the cool, rose-scented veranda, sipping ice-cold

lemonade and munching large brown raisin-filled cookies, and Eunice, with a sense of fairness, informed Don that Lois had made them for him, a deeper sense of homecoming gripped him. He wondered at it. Then he remembered these were his people. Here was his mother's very own sister. A gladness filled his soul. He loved them, and it was fine to know he had that right.

Unobtrusively, he studied Paul. Trying to analyze the character of this good-looking cousin of his, Don told himself that Paul was sweet. Then he dismissed the adjective with contempt. Sweet—that made one think of a girl, and there was nothing effeminate about Paul. He was manly in every sense of the word. Yet that adjective, sweet, kept coming to Don's mind. As he listened to the good-natured raillery between brother and sisters, Don was conscious of how much he had missed through the loss of his mother and the lack of brothers and sisters in his home. Oh, this was a homey place. He loved it more and more.

Around the corner of the house came Uncle Ben, and Don met another noble man, who also impressed him with his sweetness. Wrinkles at the corners of his eyes and the lines of his mouth could be no other than smile wrinkles, for, as his face lit up in a smile of welcome, each wrinkle seemed to be a part of it.

"So this is Ruth's boy. You look like her, son, except for Ray's eyes—so big and brown."

"Did you know my mother too?"

"Oh, yes. Many's the good time we had together.

'Ruth and Ray, Beth and Ben
Tell me now, where have you been?
For together, every day,
You'll see Beth and Ben, Ruth and Ray.'

"That used to be the favorite poem of this place twenty-five years ago."

They all laughed heartily. Aunt Beth laughed the longest. "Why, Ben, however did you remember that? I had forgotten all about it."

The children were delighted with it. Eunice repeated it over and over. Then silencing them all majestically, she said, "Listen to this one:

'Paul and Grace, Glen and Lo—
You see them everywhere you go.
Glen and Lo, Paul and Grace
They're together, every place.'

Don's heart contracted. What did the child mean? How did she know of Lo and of Glen? Was she teasing him? He forced himself to join in the laughter. At last he realized they were teasing Lois.

"Look at Lois blush. Glen must really be the one."

Don camouflaged, as best he could, his sigh of relief. Lo was for Lois, and Glen was some harmless country boy, hundreds of miles away from his Lo. A prayer of thanksgiving escaped him that he had made sure Lorel was his before he had come. Nevertheless, the unintended allusion had taken from him a great deal of his calm and satisfaction at being with them. Now an intense desire to be with Lorel, or to have her here with him, took possession of him. Could he be sure that her words to him as they had said good-by were true? She had told him so assuringly when he started on the trip, "I just couldn't love anyone else but you, Don. Don't even think of such a thing. Even if you never came back, I'd never care for anyone else."

But, now, those hundreds of miles between them seemed to mock him with doubts. If he could just hear her say that once more.

"Don't you think it's funny, Don?" Eunice questioned frankly, as she noticed his anxiety.

Caught unawares by his candid interrogation, Don confessed, "You had me worried, Eunice. I thought you were referring to Lorel—she's my girl, you know—and to Glen, a fellow in our crowd who steps where angels fear to tread, sometimes. But as long as it's Lois and another Glen, it really is funny." And he laughed merrily enough to satisfy Eunice.

"Tell me about her, about Lorel, I mean." Eunice was frankly interested. "Is she pretty?"

"Oh, Eunice," chided the shy Lois. "You shouldn't ask so many questions."

"Why shouldn't I? You said yourself, before Don came, you wondered what his girl was like."

Covered with confusion at this revealing information, Lois was grateful to Paul when he drew attention from herself by admitting that he, too, was curious. Was she pretty? Don's letter to them telling them he was coming and informing them of his engagement to Lorel had not been adequate to satisfy their curiosity.

Drawing a photograph of Lorel from his vest pocket, Don handed it to Paul, saying, "This will speak louder than words."

After looking at it for a moment, Paul gave a long, low whistle of wonder and admiration. "Say, she is a beauty."

"Let me see it! Let me see it!" And Eunice tried to take it from Paul, but she merely defeated her own purpose by her impatience. For, with a quick gesture, Paul hid the picture from her, and paternally lectured her about poise and restraint. Nevertheless, there was a twinkle in his eyes, and at last he desisted and drew Eunice onto his knee, where the two of them could see together.

Don's heart swelled with pride at the unreserved praise each one, in turn, gave in tribute to Lorel's beauty.

Sagacious beyond her years, Eunice finally asked, "Is she as good as she is pretty?" This remark sent them all into gales of laughter. That is, all but Eunice. Enigmatically, she watched them until her voice could be heard, and then announced firmly, "That's what mother always asks me when I go into raptures about someone. I don't see why it should be so funny, just because I said it."

Don loved this fellowship. Then and there was born within him a determination to have brothers and sisters for that little boy he so earnestly desired.

At dinner that night, Don was surprised to hear Uncle Ben ask the blessing on the food. Don often had been in homes where the children had said grace and afterward, with beaming faces, had received praises from the elders for having been such a good boy or girl. But here it was Uncle Ben who

prayed. And he really did pray, thought Don. He thanked God for having brought Don to them, and prayed that they might be a blessing one to another. He asked for guidance in their daily lives, for strength and wisdom for Aunt and himself as parents. When he had finished, each one said, "Amen," and Don felt altogether uncomfortable. All began talking at once, however, and the tension was instantly relieved. The meal proceeded merrily.

Again he was surprised, when, before their early retirement, they all found Bibles and responsively read one of the psalms. After that, because they all knelt, Don knelt with them while each one prayed in turn. When he realized they were praying in turn, he became panicky. Would they expect him to pray aloud! He just wouldn't. He had never heard of such a thing before. Of what religion were they? The novelty of the situation so engrossed him that he scarcely listened to the words. He was greatly relieved when they all rose immediately after Uncle Ben's prayer. He was glad that they hadn't expected him to pray. He wouldn't have known what to say.

Sitting alone in his comfortable room that night, a certain phrase that Aunt Beth had used came to Don's memory. He had purposely kept it in his mind that he might bring it out when he was alone. Aunt Beth had said, "Ever since Ruth went on to Glory." Ruth was his mother. And she had died. But he never had thought of her as having gone "on to Glory." Exactly what did it mean? Heaven, of course. But what a quaint way to put it. No, what a glorious way to put it! In his heart he felt a deep joy that he had not known before. It was comforting, somehow, to think of his mother as being "in Glory."

The next day Don learned that there was to be a party that night at the home of Grace Norton. Grace was Paul's girl. The party had been planned so that he might meet all their friends and neighbors and that they might meet him. The folks of the community were anxious to meet the cousin from Chicago.

Although it was evident that they all were looking forward to the evening with pleasure, there was no undue excitement.

Don gathered from this fact that parties were not exceptional. He himself did not know whether or not he wanted to go. Of course, he would have to go, but he wondered whatever he would do at a party without Lorel.

The Nortons lived in a large square farmhouse. Don was delighted when he entered the huge living room to meet his host and hostess and their daughter Grace. He was more delighted to find that the party was to be outside, on the lantern-decked lawn. The friendliness of the people he met tended to fill him with contentment, but the beauty of the place and the night filled him with longing for Lorel. Would it always be like this? he wondered. Would he never again enjoy beauty anywhere away from Lorel? He felt almost guilty to find pleasure in anything that she could not share with him. He didn't want to enjoy anything apart from her. With an effort, he returned the friendly greetings and acknowledged the hearty welcomes accorded him.

Don noticed that Mr. Norton, sitting under a huge oak tree, was clapping his hands for attention. Those close to him hushed others near by, and presently all were silent. Don had been surprised last night and all through the day to hear the prayers offered by his cousins and Uncle Ben and Aunt Beth. Now his amazement knew no bounds when Mr. Norton said, "We'll begin our good time tonight by asking our Father's blessing upon us." Because all other heads bowed, Don bowed his too, while Mr. Norton petitioned, "Our Father, tonight we thank thee for the privilege of being children of thine. We are so glad that we can come to thee and ask thy blessing upon us as we are gathered here. We thank thee for the shed blood of Jesus Christ in whom we have eternal life. We thank thee that we have learned to know Him as our Friend, our Help, our Rock, and our Shield. And so tonight, as we have gathered here for a happy time, may nothing be said or done to dishonor thy dear Name. Amen."

"Now, Paul," he said then, turning to him, "You come and lead us in a chorus or two, won't you?"

Then followed singing such as Don had never heard. The words came forth from hearts that seemed to mean every

word that was sung. Don judged that there must be close to a hundred people there, counting the children and all. The children sang as loud and as joyously as did their parents. Everyone was singing but himself. He felt quite angry. Why had they not told him that it was to be a church meeting? Why had they led him to believe it was to be a party? He felt rebellious for having been brought here under false pretenses.

"And now," Paul was saying, "before we have a few testimonies, let's sing my favorite chorus. Who knows what it is?"

Immediately a number of childish voices shouted out, "Friendship with Jesus." Paul smiled and nodded, but Don was bewildered. Testimonies! What in the world were they? He had read testimonies in almanacs and ads as to the efficacy of certain remedies and testimonies as to why this or that famous personage smoked certain cigarettes, but what on earth were these people to testify of?

An inkling of the truth came to him as he listened to the voices swell out in joy and praise,

"Friendship with Jesus,
Fellowship divine,
Oh, what blessed sweet communion,
Jesus is a friend of mine."

They sang it twice, with faces glowing. Yes, Don had to admit, they meant what they sang. And they were singing about friendship with Jesus. He felt a tinge of envy. That was just what he had wished he had that night he spoke of it to Lorel. He wondered if they really did have it.

But now he gave his attention to the people, as one after the other they rose, young and old alike, and testified of Jesus Christ as their Saviour. They told of sins forgiven, of peace and satisfaction in knowing Him, of changed lives, of the blessedness of being born again.

Don listened intently, especially to his cousins and his aunt and uncle. Eunice, in her childish treble, said, "I'm glad Jesus saved me while I was so young, and I'm trusting Him to keep me from the evil in this world and close to His side."

"Poor little kid," thought Don. "She's going to miss a lot

in life, being brought up so strict." However, the young people did not look as if they were missing much. They were not giggling and wise-cracking constantly, as his crowd was doing most of the time. Instead he saw in their eyes a deep and real joy, a satisfaction he had never seen in the group of which he had been president. They, it seemed, were always searching for something new, the theme question being, "What's new? What'll we do now?"

Finally, Paul closed the testimony with a merry chorus, and then the games began. They were the same games Don's friends played—the same fun and merrymaking, the same teasing of the girls by the boys. The only apparent difference now was that old and young joined together, the elders being as welcome as the young people. At the gatherings Don remembered the older folk were definitely not wanted.

As they played "Last couple out" and Don chased the couple, who happened to be Paul and Grace, half-way round the house, he found Paul catching Grace behind a lilac bush and kissing her. Don laughed to discover he was surprised that Paul was not beyond this. And a little relieved, too. At the same moment he felt such a longing for Lorel that he wished he could leave it all and rush back to her. Would he never find satisfaction away from her?

Later, when the refreshments were served daintily and generously, Don had to admit he had enjoyed the evening very much.

At the end of the party all sang, "God be with you till we meet again." They sang with such warmth and zeal that Don was mystified. They sang it as though they believed that God would really be with them until their next meeting. Why, thought Don, they sang and spoke as if Jesus actually was their friend. He again remembered the night he had wistfully told Lorel that he wished he might know God in such an intimate way. Yet now, meeting people who seemed to know Him in that capacity, he felt a mild contempt for them. Although their adieus to him were as friendly as their welcomes had been, Don was vaguely conscious of a distinction. There was no tangible reason for this, for no one had said or

done anything to cause this feeling. Yet he was sure they regarded him as a stranger.

He smiled at his reasoning. He was a stranger. How could he expect anything else? But, no, they had been more than cordial to him. He felt alien, almost as if he didn't quite understand their customs and language.

He pondered the question all the while he made ready for bed, and for sometime after his head had touched the pillow. Then he dismissed it impatiently and turned his meditations to Lorel.

VIII

His environment that summer was a revelation to Don. Without having witnessed it, he would not have believed that anyone could be as happy and contented as these people were without the pleasures and amusements of the world. Since he had come, they had never attended a theater, played a game of cards, or danced. Don had supposed it was because the very nature of their lives left no room for these things. They seemed too busy to need them.

Therefore, it was with utter astonishment that Don listened to Mr. James Ellis, the beloved pastor of the country church, read, one Sunday morning, "Love not the world. Neither the things that are in the world, for if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye and the pride of life is not of the Father but of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

Pastor Ellis then explained that a man, through his own purpose and will, could not take the love of the world out of his heart. This was an inward work of grace, performed by the Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of those who yielded themselves to Christ. This very transformation of a being no

longer conformed to the world was one of God's witnesses to the believer that he belonged to God. For every man, when he is born again, finds that new desires are awakened in him—desires for godly things, prayer, Bible study, Christian fellowship, and church attendance. These were positive proofs that he was a new creature in Christ. And he found, too, that his desire for perishable things of clay had lost their hold on him, for he saw then their futility and deception. It was indeed true that if any man loved the world, the love of the Father was not in him. The believer was called to a separated life. He was not to be even unequally yoked together with an unbeliever.

The pastor warned the young people of the disaster of an unequal yoke, in marriage especially. In order to have God's blessing upon it, marriage must be of a child of God with a child of God. He warned them against an unequal yoke in friendships too, for, as God's Word asks, "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" And he closed with the plea, "Come ye out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord."

Don was disappointed. It was a part of their religion, then, this abstinence from the seemingly harmless pleasures that he enjoyed. Well, he didn't believe in asceticism. He never would, either. He wanted to enjoy life to the full. If these people found joy in their narrowness, and thought that it would in some way please God, let them continue. But he, for one, would never adopt so austere a mode of life. But, he remembered, the minister had read directly from the Bible. Every persuasion of his had been upheld by the Word of God. Now Don had always conceded the Bible to be the true Word of God, and had unhesitatingly said he believed all of it. But this was different. He didn't see why God should have the authority to infringe on his personal liberty. He had not known that these statements were in the Bible. In fact, since he had been here, he had heard many things he had not known were in the Book. He was beginning to wonder if he really did believe all it contained.

On the way home he was moody and unresponsive. On reaching the farm, the girls went in with their mother to prepare dinner. Don found a shady spot and sat there, thinking. Presently Paul joined him.

"What's the matter, Don? Something troubling you?"

"Not exactly. I didn't like that sermon this morning, though."

"Why?"

"Well, I had been wondering about your lack of interest in worldly affairs, and I had supposed it was just that you were too busy to bother with them. But now to hear that it's your religion that restrains you, well, it just seems God is asking too much of you. I hate to think you are missing so much, Paul, just because that preacher of yours says a few pleasures are sinful."

Paul smiled quizzically. "Well, Don, you've got the cart before the horse now. You were right to begin with. We are too busy, far too busy and happy to be the least bit interested in the pleasures the world offers. That is the reason we do not want them. Our pastor spoke today of the transformed life that loses its desires for the soap-bubble pleasures the world offers and finds true value in eternal, that is godly things. We have not given these things up from a sense of duty; we have outgrown them."

"If I had to give up harmless pleasures in order to be what you call 'saved,' I wouldn't consider it worth while. After all, we're in the world."

"Yes, we are; but not of it, as our Lord and Master said of His own. But, Don, aversion to worldly pleasure is an indication of the born-again man, not his regeneration. You are saying you wouldn't want to eat hay in order to be a horse. Of course you wouldn't. But, if you were a horse, you would want to eat hay. Even I, at one time, thought the Christian life narrow and undesirable. But after I became a Christian, through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ, I received a new nature and new desires, so that I find it a joy to feed on the word of God and a blessing to pray. The things of the world have lost their allure. Where once they had a great hold on me, even as fairy stories do on children, I now see

their superficiality, their unsatisfying appeal. In other words, Jesus satisfies. I do not continuously need new pleasures, new thrills to gratify myself."

"And you mean to say that just because I do, I'm lost—I'm unfit for the Kingdom of God?"

"As I said before, Don, it's an indication that you are unfit. It's not the reason you are unfit. You are unfit for the same reason we all were. 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.' That includes you. And the acknowledgment of it is the first step toward salvation. Acknowledging it, you admit your need of the Saviour. Next, believe the blessed Truth, that 'he made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' You see, Christ took our place on Calvary and bore our penalty, in order that we might freely receive His righteousness through faith in His finished work. That righteousness which He provides is unto all and upon all that believe on Him. It satisfies even the holiness of God. And we are accepted in the Beloved."

Don rose abruptly and, without a word, left Paul. Paul bowed his head and earnestly prayed, "Oh, Father, finish the work you have begun within him."

That afternoon Don placed in a book all the letters he had received from Lorel since he had come. He carried the book to his car and then called out that he was going for a short drive. Much to Eunice's disappointment, he invited no one to go with him.

Don drove for miles, till he found a winding stream that seemed to lure him further among the dense trees lining its bank. He parked his car off the road, walked deeper into the woodland, and found a huge stump close beside a tall tree, which formed a most comfortable seat. The warmth of the day, the stillness of the air, the lazy hum of insects made him drowsy.

He shook off the drowsiness and began to open, one by one, the letters from Lorel. He passed over the news quickly, although it was most interesting, to find the phrases depicting her longing for him, and her love.

Being in a rather ugly mood, however, it seemed to him, as

he reread the letters, that there was more of news and activity than of actual yearning for him.

True, he had been glad to learn that his cousin Ken had found a job in Chicago, and was living with Mr. Coever until Don's return, and that Ken and Gay were constantly together. This brought a little relief to Don, for knowing Gay's vivaciousness, he had rather hated to leave Lorel under her influence, fearing she might induce Lorel to make a double date now and then.

That was why he read, with a great deal of satisfaction, that Opal and Lorel had become fast friends. He felt sure Lorel was safe from the sly artifice of the male mind while with Opal. And when he read that Hilda James had accompanied them on this or that outing, he felt the more secure. They had rented a cottage at the Lake, and would be leaving tomorrow for a three weeks' stay. They were looking forward to a restful time, Lorel assured him, for both Opal and Hilda, who were office workers, felt their need of rest. Mrs. James would be with them. Alice was so in love with Len that she went about in a sort of a daze. Gay would be the only one to supply variety and fun. She herself, Lorel informed him, would be a fit companion for Alice.

Don wished Gay weren't going. He knew she would hunt up the dancing places. And if Opal and Hilda, so desirous of rest, refused to go, there was no telling whom Lorel would meet. This harassing thought put Don into a still more ugly frame of mind.

The beauty of his surroundings were lost to him. It seemed depressing, sultry, and altogether a dismal place in which to be. Just then a mosquito bit him, and, with an oath, he sprang up and started for the open road. In his haste, he tripped over the root of a tree and fell headlong. His book opened, and the letters scattered here and there. It seemed now that that one mosquito, well pleased with his taste of Don, had invited all his relatives to the feast. As Don, holding the book with one hand and picking up the letters with the other, tried to discourage them by shaking his head, he felt that in all the world there was no one more miserable than he.

His girl, the one he wanted to marry, gallivanting off to a lake for a grand time with scores of other fellows, his own flesh and blood berating him and calling him a heathen just because he had a broader outlook on life than they; the day hot and sticky, and a million insects devouring him—he could think of no situation in life more intolerable than the one in which he found himself. At least, he would stay away until they had gone to church. He had felt that, as a guest, he should go with them when they went. But if they were going to keep this up—twice on Sunday, and goodness knew how often during the week—he would assert himself and stay at home.

When, on driving onto the road, he discovered a flat tire, he vented all his wrath on the task of changing it. When, at last, he was ready to start, he was much calmer.

At the farmhouse he found a light supper set out for him in the kitchen. He ate it without appetite. Then he lolled about in the dark, and hurried to his room when he saw the lights of the car approaching after the evening service was over.

After his aunt's solicitous voice had inquired as to his comfort at the door of his room, no one disturbed him. He lay there for hours, trying to sleep. But his mind was in confusion. He defended himself heroically. He was a Christian! Just because he wasn't a narrow one they needn't condemn him. He wouldn't want to be like them. In fact, he wouldn't be! What right had they to accuse him?

Suddenly he realized that no one had accused him. Oh, he was perplexed. No doubt it was his longing for Lorel that caused this jumble in his mind. He tried to rout every other thought and think of her. But he found that he could not even picture her. He wanted to look at her picture, but he was too tired to get it. So, fighting loneliness and longing and conviction of sin, though he knew it not, Don at last fell into a troubled sleep.

It was the beginning of August. Don had been at the farm for six weeks now. Despite the fact that there was a vague unrest in his soul that he himself could not define, he had

begun to love the simple life. That is, he told himself, as a vacation, not as a continuing performance.

He had become accustomed to the parties, the candy pulls that Lorel had predicted; to the picnics and the many affairs that all began and ended with prayer, and at which testimonies seemed to be an absolutely essential part. They were a wholesome group of young people and Don genuinely liked them all. He liked Grace very much. He didn't like Glen, Lois' companion as much; but he was honest enough to admit he might be prejudiced just because his name was Glen.

This August morning he was seriously considering making plans for his departure. He felt that he must see Lorel again, take her in his arms and hear her say that she loved him. Yes, his mind was made up. He would go. If he hurried he could be home early enough to see her that night. Just then the mailman came, bringing with him Lorel's daily letter. Don read, in bitter disappointment, that Mr. Mason had succeeded in getting a month's vacation and that they were leaving immediately for Maine. After visiting relatives there, they intended to motor through the New England States.

With an effort, Don tore his thoughts from the city, knowing that if Lorel were not there the great metropolis, with its August heat and din, held no enticement for him.

It seemed now as if he were constantly concerned with but two subjects. One was Lorel; the other, religion. Doggedly, he termed it religion, knowing the word was offensive to the people of the little church. They insisted it was salvation and not religion that controlled their lives. Don's resentment against their faith was diminishing a little. He recognized it for its worth. And when Aunt Beth told him that his mother had had this same faith in Christ that they had and that her prayers for his salvation had been many and unceasing, he was greatly moved.

He and Aunt Beth had many long talks together. Both of them were puzzled regarding his father. He, too, had been a zealous Christian, Aunt Beth told Don. She knew that he had grieved much for her sister, but she had not known that never since the time of his wife's death had her brother-in-law given any evidence of a Christian life. Don told her that.

Don now conceded that his aunt's family were Christian, while he was not. It seemed to be the only way to make them understand. So he adopted their vernacular and called all the worldly church folk unsaved and those of his relatives' caliber Christians.

Of course, he did not admit to himself, nor would he to anyone but them, that he and Lorel, Mr. and Mrs. Mason, his father, and Rev. Henry Daniels were not Christians. And to them he admitted it merely for the purpose of category.

"Of course, Aunt Beth, you know what I mean. Dad is a fine, clean, outstanding citizen and everything that is splendid. But you wouldn't call him a Christian. Why, he never attends church at all."

"Poor Ray. We must pray earnestly for him that his joy and fellowship will be restored."

"You wouldn't call Lorel a Christian either, but I wish you could see her, Aunt Beth. She's even more wonderful than the girls out here."

As he saw Aunt Beth's kindly smile, he laughed. "Oh, I know you think it's just because I'm in love with her. But just wait till I bring her up here sometime. You'll see then."

"I'm glad she's so fine, Don. You deserve a genuine girl."

"I do? Why I thought you thought I was just about the most obnoxious fellow you knew."

"Why, Don, of course I don't. I think you are a splendid lad. Indeed, you remind me a great deal of the rich young ruler who came to Christ to ask Him the way of salvation. He, too, was a splendid character. Even Christ, beholding him, loved him."

"But he didn't find the way," Don observed, almost as sorrowfully as the rich young ruler had turned away.

"No. He thought more of his possessions than he did of following Christ. And he preferred to keep them, sorrowfully, than to leave all and follow Christ, joyfully. That is so often the hindrance. A man will place more value on things—on business, or fame, or fortune, or friends, or pleasure—than he will on Christ. He will love the things of the world so much that he will not earnestly probe the question,

'What shall it profit a man, though he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?'

Don seemed lost in thought, and Aunt Beth left him, with the seed sown in his heart.

True to his convictions, Don had been missing the Sunday night services. Because he had always gone at home, he went on Sunday mornings. But the Sunday evening following this talk with Aunt Beth he was drawn to the church by some irresistible force.

Although he listened intently to the words of the songs as they were sung, he did not join in the singing. Suddenly, it seemed hypocritical to him to sing words that he did not mean. How could he sing "Break down ev'ry idol, cast out ev'ry foe," when he wanted to keep his idols? The testimonies made him more uncomfortable than they ever had before.

He started when Pastor Ellis read the text, Matthew 7:13 and 14: "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Don had not forgotten his meditation on the morning that Rev. Daniels had used that passage as his text.

Pastor Ellis then proceeded to tell his hearers of the two ways. One was wide and broad and filled with gayety. It was crowded. That proved that the multitude was wrong. Many took refuge in the fact that it was crowded, believing that the majority must be right. But God's Word definitely stated that the many on the broad way went to destruction. Though it appeared gay and alluring and desirable, those who traveled it made a sad choice, for, in the end, it led to destruction. That was not annihilation, but spiritual death, forever away from the presence of God. Many of those traveling this broad way believed in hell, for even Jesus spoke of the awfulness of it; yet they merrily went on toward their doom, making no effort to prevent the irretrievable loss of a soul passing through death to destruction. They themselves preferred the pleasures of sin for a season to the loneliness of the narrow way which led unto life.

For those who trod the narrow way did know much of loneliness, the same kind of loneliness that Christ had known, of being hated by the world, ridiculed and forsaken by those they loved. They knew what it meant to yearn for the souls of the lost, even as Christ had yearned when He cried, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Those on the narrow way knew the fellowship of that suffering.

But that narrow way, so strait, so true, contained a height and a depth unknown to those who refused to travel it. Its narrowness did not exclude the companionship of the Son of God, and it led straight up to everlasting life and eternal glory with Christ.

"To Glory." The words caught and held Don's attention. His mother was there. Somehow, the broad way seemed suddenly to lose its enticement for Don. The pleasures it offered seemed cheap and deceiving and superficial. The width was there merely to accommodate more of the heedless souls who preferred the company and praise of men more than the praise of God.

That strait way, with its height and depth, with the narrowness that still left room for Christ to walk it with one, became very desirable to Don. He pondered on that Man of Calvary who had purposely left the glories of heaven to come down to earth and be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, to give His life a ransom for many. Don had learned since coming here that Jesus Christ had not been killed in defeat, as he had thought, but that He could have had twelve legions of angels to take Him down from that Cross had He wished it. Had He called on those angels for deliverance, though, there would have been no forgiveness of sins, no salvation of souls, no eternal glory for the sons of men. And so, loving man, He had died according to His Father's will that men, through faith in Him, might be saved, even that he, Donald Coever, might be saved. Considering this, a great love welled up within his heart for Jesus Christ the Saviour.

His meditation had been so deep that Don had not realized

that the message was ended and that the hymn had been announced. Conscious again of his surroundings, he heard the congregation singing:

“Wounded for me, wounded for me
There on the Cross He was wounded for me;
Gone my transgressions and now I am free,
All because Jesus was wounded for me!”

“Would anyone like to accept this great and wonderful salvation?” asked the voice of Pastor Ellis.

Always before Don had looked with contempt upon him when this part of the service came. He had wondered how any man could be such a fool as to stand up there and plead for souls to come home.

Tonight his heart rejoiced at the opportunity. Before the words were fully uttered he was walking down the aisle. He knelt before the bench provided for just that purpose. As soon as Uncle Ben realized what had happened, he hurried to Don’s side and knelt with him. But when he heard the words of love and repentance pouring forth quietly from Don’s lips, he knew that no help was needed from him.

The congregation continued singing:

“Dying for me; dying for me;
There on the Cross, He was dying for me.
Now in His death my redemption I see,
All because Jesus was dying for me.

“Risen for me; risen for me;
Up from the grave He has risen for me.
Now evermore from death’s sting I am free,
All because Jesus has risen for me.

“Living for me; living for me;
Up in the skies He is living for me;
Daily He’s pleading and praying for me,
All because Jesus is living for me.

“Coming for me; coming for me;
One day to earth He is coming for me.
Then with what joy His dear face I shall see!
Oh how I praise Him! He’s coming for me!”

Don rose, his face glowing. They all crowded about him. Their faces were beaming with joy. The eyes of some of them were bright with unshed tears, while the tears were very evident in the eyes of others. But all rejoiced that a sinner had repented and brought joy into the presence of the angels.

"This is what you meant, Paul," whispered Don. "How stupid I was. I thought it was some deep mystery of which you spoke; but it was just to believe and trust in Christ's death and resurrection. I see it now. It's nothing I have done or deserve, but what He has done for me."

"Yes, lad," agreed Uncle Ben, "'For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.'"

That night, in the farmhouse, Don knelt with the family in their evening prayer fellowship. He had done this before, but he had never before joined in with a prayer.

Tonight his prayer was simple, the prayer of a true child of God. "Thank you, my Father, for Jesus my Saviour. And oh, Father, save Lorel too. Amen."

That night Don slept as he had not slept for weeks. Conviction, condemnation, and the guilt of sin were gone; salvation, full and free, was his!

IX

As DON joyously drove his car southward and homeward on a golden September day he lived over again, in retrospect, the past three weeks of his life—the first three weeks of his eternal life, he corrected himself.

It had been so wonderful to fit in, to belong to those born-again people. He found that he really had been an alien, for, until he had been born of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, he had not belonged to that holy nation. He smiled now at the assurance that he was in the place in which he belonged. Always before he had seemed to be a square peg trying to fit

into a round hole. He laughed. The simile was quaint, but true. He had often wondered what he was here for, what and who people were, what was their destiny, what was life all about. Now he knew. He had been created that he might live to the praise of his Saviour's glory in the ages to come.

Best of all, he had found that God was attainable, that Jesus was a Friend. The miracle of the indwelling Christ and the witness of the Holy Spirit that he was a child of God still filled his soul with divine joy. With Uncle Ben, Pastor Ellis, and Paul assisting him, he had pored over and studied the Epistles of Paul in rapt wonder these past few weeks. Through the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit, he had gained a wealth of knowledge, and had been amazed at the mysteries and intricacies woven into the simplicities of the Word of God. How glad he was for this new nature, which made clear to him things at one time he could not understand.

The new nature! Again he smiled. He remembered the time Paul had spoken of it. He had supposed that Paul had been theologically misinformed. But when one possessed this new nature, he knew it was there, for it brought with it an intense love for godly things, and for godly people. Yes, it had been hard to leave them. They had become so precious to him. Already he was looking forward to the time when he could again visit them and fellowship with them, his brothers and sisters in Christ.

But now he must hurry home and tell Lorel all about it. She had arrived home the previous day and now he was speeding to her. She didn't know that he was coming. She didn't know that he was a new creature in Christ. For, as she had been touring the East, there had been no way in which he could write to her. She had written to him occasionally, and had told him her only consolation would be to reread the letters he had written before. But now, in a few hours, he would be with her—with Lorel—with Lorel! How sweet the words sounded. He repeated them again and again. "With Lorel! With Lorel!"

With Lorel, seeing the blue of her eyes, hearing the sound of her voice, feeling the softness of her lips against his. With

Lorel, telling her of his new-found joy and peace, showing her the way to Christ. What a privilege that would be!

He reached Chicago at eight o'clock, and decided to have a refreshing bath at home, foregoing the impulse to hurry to Lorel immediately.

When he let himself into his father's house, it was with utter amazement he found Gay wiping the dishes for Mrs. Swenson, the housekeeper.

All three stood as though turned to stone, gazing at one another wordlessly. Ken, emerging from his room and seeing their expressions, broke into a hearty laugh. Then, crossing over to Gay, he put his arm about her and said in a most punctilious tone, "Don, may I present Mrs. Kenneth Gleason?"

Don looked from one to the other, the words having failed to make an impression.

"My wife," supplemented Ken.

The words seemed to arouse Don. "Married! You two are married? Why, you double-crossers! Why didn't you wait for Lorel and me?"

"We just discovered we were in love, and so we decided the proper thing to do was to be married. We've been married two weeks now." Ken spoke with pride, as if it were a great accomplishment.

"And we have an apartment near Lorel's house. We'll be moving in tomorrow. You and Lorel will have to call, sometime," Gay invited charmingly.

Manfully, Don battled his envy and overcame it. He congratulated Ken and wished them much happiness. "But I wish it were Lorel and I," he finished. "Well, I've got to hurry over and see her."

He rushed through his refreshing process, afterward deigning to swallow some hot coffee and delicious cake Mrs. Swenson offered him only when, refusing his refusal, she sat him down by sheer force at the little kitchen table.

As Don softly ascended the stairs of Lorel's home that evening his heart was pounding in anticipation. Stepping onto the veranda, he heard Mr. Mason's jovial voice exchanging greetings with a neighbor in the back garden. Just as he was

about to retrace his steps and join Mr. Mason, he heard from within the semidarkness of the house the music of the piano. It was Lorel playing. Even as he listened, her voice rose in solemn song, "Oh, how I miss you tonight, more than you'll ever know."

The door was unlocked. He went in. He could just distinguish her form, and now and then, as her fingers sought out the high notes, he glimpsed the whiteness of her hands.

"Lorel!"

"Don!"

They were together. His arms about her, he held her closely, as though he could never let her go. "Lorel, what could I have been thinking of, to have stayed away from you so long? I'll never do it again! Oh, Lorel, I've missed you so terribly."

"And I've missed you, Don. Oh, isn't it grand to be together again! You know, Don, I didn't enjoy that trip as much as I thought I would. It's the strangest thing how, whenever we found something unusually beautiful or interesting, I just felt I couldn't enjoy it fully because you weren't there with me. I felt guilty enjoying any privilege you couldn't share with me. Will it be like that always, Don?"

"I hope so." Don replied, truthfully and selfishly.

They sat talking together, while the twilight shadows deepened into darkness. A street light, shining through the windows, etched the shadow of the spider-web curtains on the walls about them. Noticing the fairy-like effect, Don commented on the beauty of it.

Lorel laughed softly. "Yes, often at night, when I would be here alone, I would imagine I was a fairy princess, locked within castle gates that kept you from me." Just then the headlights of a passing car set in motion the shadowy effect, and it had the appearance of iron grille gates, opening and closing. Don watched, fascinated.

"They've opened and let me in to you. I don't care if they never open again."

They heard Mrs. Mason say, as she came in through the kitchen door, "Why must there be mosquitoes to chase us in on these glorious nights? I wonder where Lorel is. The

house is dark." Entering the living room, she switched on the lamp, and saw Lorel and Don there together, with mischievous eyes, waiting to see her surprise.

The conversation turned from personalities to generalities then, and Don waxed eloquent in his praise of the hospitality and dearness of his mother's people and their neighbors.

"And now," he finished, "I've the best news of all to tell you. While I was down there I met Jesus Christ personally, and accepted Him as my Lord and Saviour."

His hearers drew back and looked at him as if he had suddenly gone mad. Lorel experienced a feeling of shame as he spoke the name, Jesus Christ.

Mr. Mason broke the stillness, "What do you mean, son?"

"Well, while there, I found that religion doesn't mean a thing. Nine times out of ten it's a form of godliness, without any power. And having no power, it is, of course, powerless to save the soul of a man or to regenerate him. This miracle of the new birth can be performed only by God Himself, through faith in Jesus Christ. It is the birth of spiritual life, which man in his natural state does not possess."

"And just how is this spiritual birth brought about?" Lorel questioned coldly.

"Well, you remember what the Gospel says, that Christ gave to all who received Him and believed on His Name the power to become the sons of God. And I have accepted Him. It's wonderful, Lorel, and I'm so glad I can show you the way to this blessed experience. All you need to do is to accept Christ's finished work on Calvary as your ground for eternal salvation. Trust that His death paid for your sins."

"My sins! Since when have you found me so great a sinner?"

"Why, we all are, honey, every one of us. 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God,' the Bible tells us. You know that's true, don't you?"

"Don Coever, don't tell me that you've been influenced by a group of those narrow-minded, self-righteous people, who think that no one but themselves are going to heaven! Opal has some relations down South like that, and she says they are simply awful. They don't dance or play cards or do any-

thing. All they ever do is go to church, and their idea of a good time is a prayer meeting."

Lorel was terrified. Opal had told her that it was impossible to dissuade these people from their convictions. They were like rocks, immovable in their beliefs. Opal had said with animosity in her voice, and as if it were an appalling thing, "They believe the Bible literally! And whatever argument you put up, they quote some passage from it to prove their point. Now, you and I know, Lorel, that we can't believe in detail everything the Bible says. Or live according to it. We're not saints!" Lorel had assented unconditionally. Now she fervently hoped that Don had not been caught in this net, this iron net, as she thought of it, that made these people so immovable. She almost whispered a prayer, as was her custom whenever disaster threatened; but she realized that it would be rather indiscreet to pray that Don would not believe the Bible so implicitly.

Don, not aware of the depth of disapproval, laughed. "You are concerned about the same things that I was, Lorel. But we read in the Bible that if any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Reversing the thought, we find that if the love of the Father is in any man, he will not love the world. You see, it isn't giving up pleasure, but rather that, having been transformed by the renewing of our minds, we are no longer conformed to this world. We no longer are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, but lovers of God more than lovers of pleasure. That's why we love prayer meetings. Prayer is talking to God, and, naturally, if we love Him we will love to pray; and we will want to read His letters to us, His Word, which we find in the Bible. You see that, Lorel, don't you? You know how eagerly we watched for each other's letters while we were separated because we love each other. Fellowship and communion with God are on the same principle."

Mrs. Mason had listened in absolute silence. Now she said, a trifle disdainfully, "Well, Don, I'm glad you are back with us. It won't take long for you to rid yourself of these old-fashioned country customs. Of course, I don't mean to speak lightly of your mother's people, but you surely must realize

that they naturally live in an entirely different world from what we Chicago people live in. It's surprising, though, for all through the Eastern states we found the people very modern, even in rural districts."

Don bit his lip. He himself had been most perverse in accepting the Gospel. But when he had thought of Mr. and Mrs. Mason and their fine characters, and of Lorel, with her sincere nature, he had supposed that as soon as they heard of salvation through the shed blood of Christ, they would fall at His feet, in joyous surrender. He had not dreamed that they would reject the blessed Saviour.

"You mean that you don't believe it?" he asked, haltingly.

"Not to that extent. We all believe in Jesus, of course, and know of His death and resurrection. But we are not so narrow as to believe that only the few who live lives of abstinence are worthy of heaven. We are all traveling on different trains, Don; but we'll all get there, even though we go by different routes. You must not let one religion take such a hold on you, that you think that it alone is right. Practice religious tolerance."

"But it's not a special religion, Mother. Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.' 'The' is a definite article. Jesus is *the* way. Not one of many ways, but the only way. 'Ye must be born again!' Must means must. For, 'except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Religion is of no avail. The new birth is absolutely necessary."

Mr. Mason, recognizing that the tension was increasing, interrupted with, "Let's not get into so serious a discussion on Don's first night with us. Let's you and I walk up for some ice cream, Don. That'll do us more good than disension."

And so the subject was dropped from the conversation, but not from the thoughts of any of them. Mr. Mason was sure that, back in his old environment, Don would soon forget his interest in this religion of his relatives. Mrs. Mason was provoked to think that he should dare suggest that Lorel was not fit for the Kingdom of Heaven. And Lorel, remembering

Opal's hopeless description of these zealots, was filled with a nameless fear that her Don was forever tainted.

For the rest of the evening Don tried to appear gay, though he was, rather unsuccessfully, covering an aching heart. But he refused to believe that rejection would be Lorel's ultimate decision. She was so dear, so sweet, when he bid her good night, that reassurance came to him. Surely, no one so fine, so splendid would be able to refuse to admit to her heart Christ, the Saviour of the world.

Although it was late when he reached home, a light still was on in the living room. Upon entering, he found his father sitting there in abject silence. Seeing Don, he rose, and greeted him with a handshake.

"Mrs. Swenson told me you had come, so I thought I would wait till you came back."

"You needn't have done that, Dad."

"I wanted to."

An embarrassing silence fell between them.

"Well, how are Beth and Ben and the children?"

"Fine, Dad. They sent their love to you." Then, abruptly, "Dad, are you a Christian? A born-again one, I mean; not a nominal one."

Mr. Coever looked away, then turned his back to Don, staring out through the open window.

After a long silence, "Why do you ask?"

"Aunt Beth said you were. And I want you to know that I am, Dad. I know that Jesus Christ is real, and that He is the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. I have been washed in His precious blood, and through Him I have eternal life." When he finished his voice was ringing.

His father turned to him longingly. "Do you really believe that, Don? You have found that fellowship with the Father and the Son?"

"Yes, Dad. Why didn't you tell me about it sooner? You do know it, don't you?"

Mr. Coever spoke with effort. "I did know it, Don. But I've been a coward. When He took your mother away from me, I became bitter. I didn't think it was fair. I loved her so. And so, in my bitterness, I closed my heart to the Holy

Spirit's pleading, although I often felt it at first. Then, as the years slipped by, I put it from me altogether and told myself it had been an imaginary bliss which your mother and I had known in fellowship with God."

"Oh, Dad. I think it would have been easier for you if you had said, 'Not my will, but thine.' I think God would have comforted you."

"I know that now, Don. I certainly have not known contentment nor peace in my rebellion. Do you think it's too late for me to come back and ask forgiveness?"

"Could anyone be farther away than the Prodigal Son was, Dad? And what did his father do? When he was yet a long way off, he ran and kissed him."

A rather tremulous smile came to Mr. Coever's lips. "I guess I'll start for home," he said to Don, and went alone to his own room, where that night he found forgiveness and fellowship with the Father.

X

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SATURDAY, at about noon, Don returned to his home, after having assisted Ken and Gay to establish themselves in the tiny three-room apartment they had rented. Don felt lonely and desolate. Although the furnishings of his home were in much better taste and far more expensive than those which Ken had purchased for his bride, he felt a vague sense of dissatisfaction with everything. After all, what did the furnishings matter? If only he had some place to which he could take Lorel and set up a home. But he was just now ready to enter business. It would still be some time before he dared assume the responsibilities of marriage. But having seen Ken and Gay so deliriously happy with their own possessions, he had become impatient for the time when he and Lorel would know that joy.

Because of the intensity of his longing for a home of his

own, with Lorel enshrined in it, he was extremely perplexed when, that afternoon, his father confronted him with a proposition.

"You were right, Don," his father greeted him on his return from the office. "The Father took me back to Himself. I have been thinking of you all morning, Don, and been wondering if you would like to enter the Bible Institute and fit yourself for service for Christ. It is the thing I had always longed to do and never had the opportunity. It is a two-year course."

Don's eyes lighted with pleasure. He had heard much about the thorough training in spiritual things the students at the Institute received, and had coveted the privilege, although he had never supposed it would be his.

"But, Dad, isn't it time for me to begin supporting myself? I'm twenty-one already. And it's time for me to find my place in the world."

"I believe a thorough understanding of the things of God would be a splendid foundation for just that," smiled Mr. Coever. "But I am merely suggesting it. Pray about it first, son, and let me know later."

Now Don's heart was a veritable whirlwind. Marriage—a home—or this great opportunity to learn more about the blessed Book which had become so precious to him! What should be his choice? He knew that he couldn't marry Lorel at all until she was a Christian, but this gave him little concern, for he was sure that before long, after she had learned more of what Christ meant to him, she would herself accept Him as Lord.

Mohd. Inayat-ullah.

After prayer, he knew that the Institute was the place for him. Just last night Lorel had suggested that they should not be married until the following summer. Another year would not be so long, and then he would be fitted for full-time service, should he be called to it. He was certain Lorel would be in favor of it.

But that evening, as they walked erratically up and down the streets, making little detours here and there to avoid the shower from lawn sprinklers overrunning their bounds, Don found it difficult to tell Lorel of his decision.

She was very gay, and laughed again and again whenever they had to step aside quickly to escape the onslaught of a tricycle or wagon, as the driver rushed madly at them, shouting, "Agool! Agool!" or shrilly whistling, "Wheet!"

But internally, Lorel was far from gay. All through the night she had awakened again and again, conscious of fear, tormenting fear. Was Don irrevocably bound by this new religion? What would it mean to them? If, like Opal's cousins, he refused to relinquish his new conception of what Christianity meant, what interests would they have in common?

But as they walked and talked and Don made no allusion to it, her fear diminished. Perhaps he had already been dissuaded.

"Weren't you surprised when you heard about Ken and Gay?"

"I couldn't believe it. At first, I didn't think it was fair. We've known each other so long, and they've known each other for such a short time, and now they are married—and we——"

He began to speak more swiftly, as if speed of word gave him courage to continue. "We may have to wait much longer. I've decided today to enter the Bible Institute as a student this fall, Lorel. You said you didn't want to be married until you were twenty-one, anyway, and this would mean postponing our marriage for just a little more than six months after that."

Lorel's heart sank. She was filled with an indefinable dread. It seemed that something—she didn't know exactly what it was—was coming between them, forcing them apart. She was silent so long that, at last, he asked, "What do you think about it, Lorel?"

"Well, what is the Bible Institute, and where is it?"

"Right here in Chicago. The students live at the Institute, and are thoroughly trained for Christian work of any type. A complete study of the Bible is the thing that attracts me. Dad suggested that I take it as a foundation for whatever work I choose later on."

"Your Dad did?" Lorel was mystified. Mr. Coever had

seemed so pleased with her, she could scarcely believe that he should raise this new barrier.

"Yes," Don informed her eagerly. "You know, Lorel, I discovered last night that Dad is a born-again Christian too, but that in his bitterness over Mother's death he had quenched and stifled God's Spirit in him. Last night, after learning of my conversion, he himself was restored to fellowship with God."

Purposely, Lorel ignored the last bit of information. "I don't blame him for being bitter. If God did such a thing to me, I'd never believe in Him again!"

"But, Lorel, how can you say that? Death is the wages of sin, and we all must meet it, and we all must give up loved ones to it. If others must bear that grief, why should we be spared it?"

Guilty, and a little afraid of her own words, Lorel pleaded, "Oh, Don, are you really going to be one of those religious fanatics? Is that the only thing you can talk about?"

"Not the only one—but the most important."

"You used to think that I was the most important thing in your life."

"Christ is now, and that makes you more important to me—not that I love you less, Lorel, but that I love Him more. I know I used to worship you most, Lorel, and, in doing so, I broke the very first commandment. But now that He is my Lord I wouldn't want to do anything against His will."

Lorel felt frustrated. It irked her beyond measure to know that anything had a greater power over Don than she herself had. She wanted to challenge him with the choice between herself and this Jesus he seemed to know so intimately. But she felt instinctively that she would be the loser. She must bide her time, and wait until his fervor had cooled. She would try indifference. It possessed more persuasion than compulsion, she well knew.

"I think your plans are perfect. Gay says I could take her job next week. That'll give me an opportunity to use my commercial knowledge, besides putting away a little nest egg for my own personal use. I can scarcely wait to begin my

venture into the business world. I believe every girl should have some such experience before marriage."

She felt a little mortified when Don heartily united his genuine enthusiasm with hers, which was feigned.

She would not admit that her own charm was failing, and, while Don planned enthusiastically for the coming two years, Lorel mentally arranged an attack on Don's spiritual zeal. At first, she would pretend to adopt his views. A little later she was sure that she could cajole him back to the old ways. After all, he adored her, and she was well aware of the potency of love.

XI

ON SUNDAY morning Don's return was hailed with cheers by the young people at church. He was immediately asked to take a class of unruly boys whose teacher had not come. More than one head nodded knowingly when Ben Jackson failed to appear. Although it was most politely discussed behind raised hands, with the injunction not to tell anyone else, they all knew that Ben occasionally went on a spree. He actually drank a little too much, and was indisposed the following morning. As he usually imbibed on Saturday nights, his Sunday-school class often needed a substitute teacher.

No one really condemned Ben, excepting Opal, and she vehemently protested against his wanderings. This she did earnestly, as she did everything else. But Ben was very likeable, for at all other times he was the most kind and lovable fellow in the crowd. Mr. and Mrs. Jackson were members in good standing, and no one would dare defy them by calling Ben to account.

So Don took the class this morning, and was conscious of a strange longing to teach these boys. He had a desire to tell the old, old story that he had never before known. The lesson was on the prayer petition, "For thine is the kingdom,

and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." Don digressed from the lesson, and with all the fervor of his soul told these restless, irresolute boys about the coming King, who once had come as a man of sorrows and had been smitten, stricken, and afflicted for the sins of the world. But He would some day come in power and great glory and slay with the brightness of His countenance those who had rebelled against Him, Don assured them.

He saw the restless boys change into wondering wells of curiosity while he spoke, and he was interrupted more than once with an earnest question from one or another.

The boys were astounded. The story held more appeal for them than any of the knights of old, and when Don assured them that it was true, and would soon come to pass, and admonished them to choose the right side, the Lord's side, and fight the battle against the ancient foe, he awakened in the hearts of all of them the desire to be on the winning side. The bell for dismissal rang all too soon, and the boys begged him to be their teacher again next Sunday.

Before the morning church services commenced, Opal, who, because of her positive merit, had been elected to the presidency after Don's departure, cornered him, and informed him that she would not take no for an answer. He would have to be the speaker next Friday at Young Peoples. It happened to be devotional night. Of course, he could speak about his trip, and if he just brought in some thought in keeping with devotion, it would pass. Don very gladly consented to speak.

As the service progressed, Don felt a suffocating atmosphere. He had forgotten the formality of the morning service. It went on with unvarying precision. The only diversion, which set the choir into muffled paroxysms of laughter, was when Jane Dennison, busily talking with her chum, who sat next to her, pulled out her monthly train ticket, while the offering was being taken, and unwittingly proffered it to the usher. As she held it toward him, and he stared wonderingly at it, she became aware of her error at last, and, with smothered giggles, hastily put it into her purse.

Then she drew out her offering envelope and dropped it into the collection plate.

This bit of byplay, even though it was funny, cleared the air for a time of ceremonialism. But by the time Rev. Daniels entered the pulpit, everyone again was wearing the sanctimonious expression suitable for morning worship.

Don and his father, who had come with him for the service, listened intently. The text was read from Matthew 22:1 to 10. It was the parable of the marriage feast, to which those who were bidden found excuses for not coming—farming, merchandising, and marrying. This, said Rev. Daniels, depicted the Sunday morning services at the church. All through the week he gave of his time and strength to the preparation of a feast on Sunday morning. With true tolerance, he invited all to come and partake. However, only a few recognized their privilege. Many were so busy with the affairs of this life that they found no time to set aside a few hours on Sunday morning to worship God. He admonished the congregation to obey the command and go out and bring in others for the next Sunday morning's service. He was afraid too many churches forbade membership to those whom they considered bad. But one could see here, by the Word of God, that it was His will that they should all be admitted as members. Good and bad, all were welcome at the feast, and he, for one, wanted all and sundry to receive a hearty welcome at his church.

In all that assembly Don and his father were the only ones who read their opened Bibles along with the minister. This sight caused more than one upraised eyebrow.

As the message, so distorted, was given out and Don saw how easily it satisfied the congregation, it seemed his heart was breaking. Of course, not having their Bibles, they did not know what the following verses contained. But while the organ was being played, Don read and reread them: "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment. And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and

cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen."

Rev. Daniels had conveniently ignored this portion. For carrying out his simile, it would have to mean that no one could enter the church unless properly and beautifully clothed for the service. Bitterly Don reflected that although this held very true in that church, it wouldn't do to find it in the Bible. That God would not be guilty of such prejudice even they recognized.

After dinner, in the Masons' home, Mr. Mason asked Mr. Coever, who was their guest that day, "Well, what did you think of that sermon this morning? I thought it fine. I admire religious tolerance, especially in a preacher. Don, here, needed that lesson. He was getting to the place where he supposed some little sect he knows had a corner on heaven."

Quietly, Mr. Coever answered, "I'm afraid Rev. Daniels misrepresented the text. It was a marriage supper and not a church service Jesus spoke of. And the king who made the marriage is God the Father. Rev. Daniels is not a king and he has no son. God has prepared the supper and not Rev. Daniels. It is the future marriage supper of the Son of God this parable describes. And all are bidden—good and bad. Salvation through the shed blood of Christ is for all who will accept it, for all who acknowledge their own righteousnesses as filthy rags, and accept the robe of Christ's righteousness as their covering."

"Yes," added Don, "and he neglected to say what would happen to those who attempted to come to the wedding wearing their own robes of self-righteousness. Let me read it to you." From the copy of the New Testament he had been studying he read the solemn words, "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen."

Lorel and Mrs. Mason appeared displeased, Mr. Mason, bewildered. "Well, now, think of that!" he said. "I thought it was a splendid message until you opened it up in the other light. It does seem rather superficial now. But Rev. Daniels

is a noted Bible preacher. It seems strange that he should miss so much of the thought behind it, doesn't it?"

"Not at all," answered Mr. Coever. "God warns us that 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned.'"

"Do you mean to say," asked Lorel, with a trace of contempt, "that you, who have never entered a theological school, know more of the Bible than Rev. Daniels does, who has spent years in study of it?"

"Perhaps not more about the Bible, Lorel," he answered courteously, "but more of its truth and demonstration. Experience is the best teacher, and knowing and living the truths give one a much greater knowledge of them than merely studying them. Even Jesus rejoiced over this fact, and prayed, 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.'"

"Just what do you say is Rev. Daniel's status, then," coldly inquired Mrs. Mason.

"Trusting in good works and morality as his hope of salvation, he is lost and needs by simple faith in the Word of God and in the death of Christ to be born again that he may be saved." Then hurrying on as he saw the steely glint in Mrs. Mason's eyes, he quoted II Corinthians 11:13-15, "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works."

Unbelieving, Mr. Mason said, "Let me read that myself."

Don found the reference and handed the Testament to him. He read it through in thick silence. All saw him turn the page back and reread it. Shaking his head as though this thing were incomprehensible, he handed it back and rose. They all rose with him, and as Mrs. Mason began to clear the table, Don tenderly took a cup from her hands and com-

manded her to follow the men into the living room. He and Lorel would do the dishes, and they, he added mischievously, did not want any third party about to spoil their privacy.

Vexed though she was, Mrs. Mason could not help but respond to the tender concern and love in his voice and eyes. "You are a dear, Don," she said.

As the various duties of clearing the table separated Lorel and Don, he pondered with pride on his father's knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been astonished by the ease and accuracy with which his father had quoted various passages. It must be wonderful to be so at home with the Word of God. He felt impatient for the morrow, when he would enroll as a student at the Bible Institute.

He was highly pleased to hear Mr. Mason plying his father with questions each time he reëntered the dining room. Mr. Mason's interest gratified him. If only one of them would yield to Christ, he was confident the other two would follow. They were all so close in all their associations.

In the kitchen, Lorel, in utter silence, began to wash the dishes. Glad because of Mr. Mason's attention, Don addressed her imploringly. "Lorel, why don't you yield yourself to Him right now and acknowledge your need of the Saviour? He—" She quelled him with a contemptuous glance as she dropped the dish mop and turned to face him squarely. The anger in her eyes stabbed him with pain as she said unfalteringly, "Donald Coever, I am tired of this subject. I want you to drop it from the conversation whenever you are in my presence. I do not care one whit what Corinthians or any one else says. I am perfectly satisfied with my religion. I am willing to allow you the privilege of your convictions, and I expect you to allow me the privilege of mine."

Then, because of Lorel's vehemence, cups and saucers received the most thorough scrubbing they had ever known, and the most methodical and thorough wiping because of the threatening tears which compelled Don to polish them much longer than was necessary that he might blink the tears back before they came.

XII

THAT week Don enrolled as a student in the Bible Institute. Because he would have to reside there much time that could otherwise have been spent with Lorel would be denied him. He would be allowed only an occasional evening away from the school. However, until the time when he would be sent out with various groups to missions scattered throughout the city the week-ends would be his own.

This week, before classes convened, Don saw Lorel as often as he could. But relations between them were decidedly strained. More than once he began to tell her vivaciously of some joyous anticipation or of a new spiritual truth he had found, only to remember her command and stop short, thwarted.

When Opal heard from Lorel what had happened to Don, she began a wrathful tirade against those busybodies who thought they had to win every one else to their opinion. She was afraid Don was utterly hopeless now, for, as she had said before, people of his views were provokingly obstinate. She offered all her sympathy to Lorel and pleaded with her not to allow Don to influence her to such a narrow life. Lorel informed Opal that she was sure Don already knew that she was invincible. Opal commended her stand.

The same formality that had prevailed at the Sunday morning service was evident at Young Peoples on Friday night, after quiet and order had been ultimately attained. With Opal as leader, it took much less time, Don noticed, than it had when he had presided.

The same songs that had been sung up in the little Wisconsin church were sung here. But how differently! That ringing quality which bespoke earnestness and those glowing faces were sadly missing. As they sang their favorite, "I Love to Tell the Story," Don reflected sorrowfully that, so far as he knew, not one of them ever told the story of Jesus and His love. They never even spoke of it to one another, much less told it to those who were opposed to the truth of Christ. As Sunday-school teachers they taught the children the lesson

as it was written. There was no seeking to save the lost by telling them the story. Yet they sang it through, enjoying the melody.

Opal was a very proficient leader. When, at last, she introduced Don as their speaker, stressing that she had asked him to speak of his trip, Don felt a momentary trepidation. With a prayer for strength, he stood before them, beside the little table at which Opal remained. With much surprise, they heard him ask that they bow their heads in a word of prayer. Then, after a short prayer for the blessing of the Holy Spirit, Don began his message.

Paul the apostle was his theme. After his own conversion, Don had felt that his self-sufficiency had been so much like that of Paul that he had read and studied all he could find of this great man of God. Now he proceeded to paint a picture for his hearers with words, the picture Paul gives of himself in the third chapter of Philippians—circumsized the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecution of the church, touching the righteousness which is the law, blameless. This, Paul averred, gave him the right to have confidence in the flesh, if any man had that right. No one could boast of a more perfect, a more moral, a more outstanding record than his. Socially, racially, politically, religiously, financially, intellectually, he had achieved great success. Morally, he was blameless. Surely his was a splendid record. This record meant for Paul social prestige, financial success, physical comfort, fame, honor, and power—all that any man might desire.

Yet Paul's testimony after having met the Lord Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus, and having yielded to Him with the words, "Lord, what wilt *thou* have me to do?" was this: "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Yes, Paul had counted as dung, all these advantages, for, by way of contrast, see his life a few years later, as reviewed by him in the eleventh chapter of Second Corinthians; "In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep. In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city . . . in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

Surely he had lost social prestige, racial support, financial success, and physical comfort for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. He had found the knowledge of Christ of greater value and excellence than all the advantages the world could offer. He preferred ignominy with Christ, physical hunger and thirst to spiritual starvation; poverty and the persecution of the world with Christ to wealth, success, and honor without Him.

The natural man would call Paul a fool, pointed out Don. But was he? The names of the Pharisees were long since forgotten, except as they were remembered in dishonor. But the name of Paul was still being carried into every country in the world. Paul, willing to be unknown, was known of God. And thus he had achieved real fame. And wealth was his, for the wealth of all heaven, in joint heirship with Christ, was his now. Throughout all the endless ages of eternity Paul would have physical comfort, for there is no pain there, neither sorrow nor crying.

The promise is, "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." So Paul had power. His power, wealth, comfort, and fame were durable, everlasting. Stardom in various fields was thought worthy of great effort these days, but to Don it seemed that the proper name for those celebrities should be shooting stars, for they flashed across the span of life, applauded and acclaimed for only a few short moments,

and then went out into darkness. But "he that winneth souls is wise: and they that be wise shall shine as the stars forever and ever." Paul had attained eternal stardom. And so could any one who would fall at the feet of Jesus the Saviour and say, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Don's voice rang out resolutely, "And, oh, dear friends," he concluded, "I haven't known the sufferings that Paul knew, but I do know the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, and I want to tell you tonight, that it is worth knowing. The way to know it is very simple and plain. You all assent mentally to the fact of Christ's death and resurrection as a propitiation for your sins, but in order to validate His sacrifice you must appropriate it to yourselves. I can think of no better way to explain it than to tell you to call upon His name, acknowledging your need of Him. Show your willingness to own Him as your Lord in the words of Paul, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' For, 'if any man wills to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine.' The choice is yours." After a brief prayer for Holy Spirit enlightenment, Don sat down.

No one spoke. No one could speak. Though few knew it, the Spirit of the Living God was in their midst. All were conscious of a Presence, but few recognized Him. Suddenly, a muffled sob broke through the stillness. There, right before them all, still seated at the little table, Opal, with a little moan laid her head on her arms, while the sobs came louder and louder. All sat spellbound, while Opal the perfect, Opal the correct, Opal the unemotional sobbed unrestrainedly.

No one knew just what to do, for no one was sure of the meaning of the tears. But Don was hoping and believing that they were caused by a contrite spirit, for the promise is, "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."

He suggested they close by singing "Oh, Happy Day." The hymn was unfamiliar to them, and they sang it to relieve the tension, and without fervor. When Opal raised her head they were amazed to see the radiance in her face as she joined them in singing. Don's voice and hers rose above the rest

as they joyously sang, "'Tis done, the great transaction's done; I am my Lord's and He is mine."

Immediately after the last note had been sung, Ben Jackson bellowed, "Let's adjourn." But there was a strange quality in his voice.

"Yes," seconded Len, and, in an undertone, "This gives me the willies."

Most of them passed out quickly, but a few lingered. Those outside tried to inject the usual levity into their leave-taking, but failed; and no one suggested ice cream at the Sugar Bowl.

Opal turned to Don. "I see it so plainly now, Don. Jesus died for me. Mere morality could not supplant that finished task. As long as I depended on my goodness for salvation I was rejecting His sacrifice for me. Why, my self-pride was my greatest hindrance."

As she left, Opal smiled goodnight to those who still remained. She received in return rather questioning glances from all but Hilda, who returned her smile with a glare of disgust. Passing Lorel, Opal took her hand and said, "Oh, Lorel, don't believe the foolish things I said before. I was blind, but now I see."

Lorel waited at the door for Don until he had turned out all the lights and locked the inner doors. Just as he joined her, Ben Jackson returned and asked Don if he might have a few words with him. The two went back to the study, and Lorel went out into the warmth of the autumn night.

From a group that was slowly walking down the street these words drifted back to her, "Goodnight! It was worse than a Billy Sunday meeting!" And then giggles and one loud guffaw.

Well, yes, it had been silly, she thought. How could anyone be so unrestrained? She, for one, never could. It wasn't her nature. But it had been Opal! Opal, of all people the most restrained, the most careful and concerned about her reputation. That was the perplexing part. How ashamed Opal would be tomorrow, when the emotion wore off. Lorel admitted that she herself had felt a strange emotion while Don had spoken. There had been a drawing, a desire to forget all her pride and dignity, to count them as worthless, even

as Paul had done, that she might know Christ better. But she had fought it off. She was glad now that she had. Someone might have supposed that she had not been a Christian before, if she had in any way expressed her desire to know Christ better. And she was a Christian, she told herself emphatically. She had nothing to give up, and she would not, no, she never would be a narrow one!

Sauntering homeward slowly, she had reached the corner before Don joined her. He couldn't keep the joy from his voice as he greeted her, "I'm so glad, Lorel."

"Oh, don't be too glad. I'm afraid Opal will revert to type tomorrow," she answered, with a conviction she did not feel.

"You can't revert to type when the Lord takes possession of you like that. Opal is a new creature in Christ. And so is Ben."

Lorel stopped short. "Ben!"

"Yes. He wanted to know Christ like Paul did too. He admitted that he needed some power beyond his own to keep from the drink habit. He was sure that if Christ could make so courageous a man of Paul, He could give him victory over temptation. And Christ will give it to him." Don laughed joyously.

Nothing Lorel could say would diminish his joy. After he had left her, Lorel felt snubbed, slighted, and altogether unhappy. Although she would not concede it even to herself, she felt quite shaky now that Opal, her main stay, had not only been taken from her but actually translated to the other side. She felt a quick impatience with Opal's perfidy, and a deeper impatience with the stubborn obstinacy with which Opal would assume her position of being right, now that she was one of those "immovables."

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XIII
ALLAHA

DON was very much surprised when, on Saturday afternoon, Mrs. Swenson knocked on the door of his room and informed

him that Rev. Daniels wished to see him in the living room.

Peering wonderingly through the hallway, he caught a glimpse of his eminent caller sitting on the edge of his chair, rather nervously biting his lips. He was a very small man and quite bald. Nevertheless, he was an imposing personage, with finely molded features and aristocratic manner.

Although he had been Don's pastor since childhood, Don had never before had any intimate chats with him. As a child, Don had always looked upon him as God personified, and so had been greatly afraid of him. Judging by the sudden and profound silence which took possession of the Sunday-school rooms at the moment of Rev. Daniels' entrance each Sunday morning for a few minutes of inspection, Don was afraid that many of the children there even now had the same false conception that he had had.

Don covered his perplexity, and welcomed Rev. Daniels heartily. They spoke of the weather, of the war in China, of the rising prices of food commodities. Then, because it was ever-present with him, Don mentioned last night's meeting.

"We had a blessed time at Young Peoples last night, Rev. Daniels. Two souls were saved."

"Two?" interrupted Rev. Daniels with a shocked expression.

"Yes, Opal and Ben Jackson."

"That's what I came to speak about, Donald. You realize, of course, that in our church such an exhibition is entirely out of place. Opal and Ben have both been Christians since childhood; they were reared in Christian homes. You must not think that just because you, with your eloquence, swayed them into making public shows of themselves that they are any different from what they were before."

"But, sir, they will both admit to you that they had never been born again, in spite of their church affiliations."

"Well, we, in our church do not stress that doctrine, especially. That is more for the atheist, or perhaps those who have sinned deeply."

"But Jesus spoke these words to Nicodemus. He was neither an atheist nor a vile sinner. On the contrary, he was religious and moral. That's why I'm sure these words apply

to religious church members as well as to any one else. Jesus said, 'Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.' That included all men, whether good or bad, religious or not. And again he said, 'Ye *must* be born again.' "

Rev. Daniels' face slowly took on a reddish hue. He drew himself up to his utmost height, and said most determinedly, "Nevertheless, we, in our church do not stress or even believe it." Each word was thrust out as though it were a pin intended to jab Don's consciousness with the realization that what "we the church" thought was the predominating influence and far surpassed the authority of God's Word.

"And," the pastor continued, "it must not happen again. A committee of our most respected members visited me this morning and demanded that there never again be such a demonstration among our young people. Mrs. Grey is mortified to think that Opal should have so degraded herself. She is positively ill lest any one, as well they might, get the impression that Opal has been secretly wicked. Mrs. James, who told Mrs. Grey about the incident, has warned me that she and Mr. James will resign immediately they hear of any more of this foolishness. Hilda, it seems, was greatly perturbed and lost a full night's rest because of this much-to-be-regretted agitation. You must remember that you are young, Donald"—this with a condescending smile—, "and some day you will learn that we, as leaders, must be careful to give offense to none. I admit that this is one of my most difficult problems as the pastor of my flock. I hope that you will not feel affronted. But, of course, you know that both the Greys and the Jacksons have been our most dependable members. And I must say, too, that they are the largest contributors to our work. You can well see that I must take into consideration their desires, can't you?"

Rev. Daniels immediately wished that he had not invited Don's opinion when Don answered respectfully, but firmly, "No, sir, I don't. Your responsibility as a minister is to preach the Word as you find it. The chief priests loved the praise of men more than the praise of God, and by it they crucified the Lord."

Rev. Daniels rose quickly and angrily. "That will do,

young man! I believe I will have to ask for your resignation. If you wish to be the authority, start a church of your own. I have labored long and untiringly to build up the successful church I now have. I cannot allow you, with your impetuosity and desire to dominate, to come in and ruin my carefully built work. It is a great work and I must protect it and keep it from collapsing."

"Please don't be angry, Rev. Daniels," pleaded Don, "but you are building it upon sand. That's why the danger of its falling is so great. Why don't you build it upon the great rock foundation, Jesus Christ the Lord? Then it would stand amid the storms, and the gates of hell could not prevail against it."

As always, a soft answer turned away wrath. Rev. Daniels blinked a little at the prospect. The thought of a church so built seemed very desirable. His church, built upon compromise and strategy and the skillful settling of this grievance or that, seemed suddenly to be a greater burden than he could bear. But too much was involved. He had been a poor young man, and this comfortable livelihood, comprising also esteem and social distinction for himself, was very precious to him. He couldn't give it up. Not yet, at least.

"You are a fine lad, Don. I'm glad you didn't get angry. But you understand my position. I think it will be a good thing if you do resign and stay away from the Young Peoples' meetings for a while. I'll be glad to welcome you at the Sunday morning services, however. And I wish you success in your life. But I assure you, if you hold rigidly to your present convictions it will never be financial success that you will attain. In this modern day, men and women refuse to be dominated by religion. They wish to enjoy its benefits, but do not wish to be hampered by old-fashioned doctrine. And if you insist upon crossing the current of public opinion, they retaliate by refusing to support you with their money. Of course, you can expect nothing else. It is their money, and they have the right to say what you, as their servant, shall teach them. And now I must get along. Good afternoon." With a beaming smile and a wave of his hand, he was gone.

Slowly Don found his way back to his room. He was con-

scious of a heaviness of soul such as he had never known before. His heart seemed leaden. He had known loneliness and longing and all the awfulness of jealousy in regard to Lorel, but never had he known anything like the grief which now seemed to possess him. The picture of the Lord Jesus enduring the agony of Calvary was etched in his mind. And these people, who professed to know Him, who carried on a business in His name, refused to believe His own words. They themselves wanted to choose or reject the Word of God according to their own desires. How true were Paul's words to Timothy, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

Don sighed deeply as he thought of the Jacksons and the Greys. Both families were very active in the church. To them belonged most of the honor for swelling the treasury by their own contributions and by devising new and interesting ways of making money for the church. Don thought wistfully of the little country congregation, where, according to the Word of God, "each one, on the first day of the week, laid by as God had prospered him," and offered it freely and gladly to the Lord's work, without expecting in return an apron or a cake or a supper or amusement. Surely, he thought, "the zeal of the house hath eaten me up." No time for Jesus! No time for diligent Bible study! He thought again of the Wisconsin church, of the Bible classes, which were attended by practically every member of the church, where both young and old eagerly pored over their Bibles, studying, asking, and answering questions. Such a thirst for knowledge! Such a hunger to learn more and more of the things of eternity! Don felt a touch of joy to know that somewhere were those to whom these things were first and precious.

But to be asked to resign from a church because he had preached the Word! It seemed so incongruous, so entirely inconsistent. His heart grew heavier and heavier, until from sheer soul weariness he fell to his knees. Words failed to take form other than the cry of his wounded heart, "Jesus,

oh, Jesus." Then, after a time, came a stumbling prayer for Opal and Ben, that they might be held true, that opposition might not dim their joy, that the reality of Christ to them might keep them victorious. As Don prayed, strength returned, and his perplexity gave way to the joy and calm which Jesus gives.

At precisely that time, Lorel and Mrs. Mason sat comfortably in the warmth of the September sun on their front veranda. The only sound of alertness on this drowsy afternoon was the clickety click of the lawn mower coming from the back of the house. To Mrs. Mason it gave a sense of comfort. She always was glad to have her husband near, and although she could not see him, this evidence of his activity close by increased her content. After a time, however, she became conscious of Lorel's obvious inattention to her book. At length, she closed her own and addressed Lorel. "That's the third sigh in five minutes, dear. Is something troubling you?"

Lorel laid her book down, too, glad to discontinue her pretense of interest in it, and shook her head.

"If it's about last night, Lorel, try to forget it. I would have a frank talk with Don tonight and tell him he must stop this nonsense. He loves you dearly, Lorel, and surely you have a great influence over him. Point out to him how much he will lose—financially, socially, and every way, if he continues down this present path."

Lorel sighed deeply again before she spoke. "If you had heard him last night, Mother, you would realize that that seems to be his aim. He seems to think there's something virtuous in being a social and a business failure. And whatever other criticism I could make regarding his talk, I couldn't say he was insincere. He meant every word of it. Oh, Mother, I'm so bewildered. I can scarcely understand my own feelings for him. I know I still love him with all my heart, and yet, Mother, I sometimes feel the most peculiar aversion to him. I wonder if it's just because I am powerless to change his opinions."

"You will have to do it, Lorel. Your marriage could never be a happy one with this division between you. I never did

believe that marriage between those of different religions should be forbidden, but in a case like this, where one's creed seems to affect and dominate one's entire life, you can see what controversies might ensue. I would bring the thing to an issue tonight and demand that he earnestly try to put this overpowering conviction from him."

"I'll do it! I'll compel him to take me to the dance tonight. Why, there's Opal coming up the walk."

After the exchange of greetings, Opal immediately came to the point. "I had to come, Lorel, and tell you how sorry I am for all the things I said before regarding salvation. Lorel, since last night, I've been reading my Bible with an interest I never thought possible. And, so far, I must admit that everything my cousins and Don have said are borne out in it. If the Bible is the Word of God, and I know it is, then their authority comes from Him, and they have the right to state as fact whatever it contains. Why, take this one verse alone and see what havoc it plays with my former conviction that living a clean and moral life is the best way to reach heaven. It's found in Ephesians, 2:8 and 9: 'For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.'

"Don't you see, Lorel, grace means unmerited favor—favor undeserved; and that's how we are saved. We don't deserve it at all, but we receive this gift through faith, faith in Jesus Christ as our Saviour. And this phrase explains itself—'not of works, lest any man should boast.' It definitely says 'not of works.' Well, then, all our goodness couldn't save us. I looked up in our old family Bible, through the concordance, all the passages pertaining to 'works,' because, you see," she smiled, "that has been my hindrance for so long. I've felt that I was pretty good. It's amazing what I found!"

And so Opal, with her new nature, still possessed the qualities of her old one, which under the hand and influence of God became an asset. And here on the first day of her new life in Him she had retained her methodical precision and carefully followed out the one word, "works," which she realized had been her false refuge.

"Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of

grace but of debt,' " she continued. " 'But to him that worketh not but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness, Romans 4:4 and 5.' " Opal was like that. If she took the time to memorize a verse of Scripture, she would also take the time to remember just where it was found.

"And so you see," she explained, "it's of grace. Well, if it's grace it can't be works. If you have earned heaven, there's no need for grace. And, oh, Lorel, weren't we foolish? Whatever in all our lives have we done that would earn heaven for us? I used to think I was doing so much, but today I can't think of a thing in my favor. Attending church regularly? Well, that's a benefit to me. It's not doing God a favor. Keeping things in order and restraining the exuberance of the younger girls? Well, that has been a pleasure. I love to domineer. Not drinking or smoking? Well, that's a physical benefit. No, none of us that I can see has done anything to merit the joys of heaven."

"Have you told your Mother this, Opal?" asked Mrs. Mason.

A cloud seemed to overshadow Opal's face. "Yes. Mother is very much upset about it. She seems to think my acknowledgment of being a sinner and needing the Saviour implies that I have been a sinner of the deepest dye. She will not admit that we are all sinners, even though we read in Romans 3:23,—'For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.' When I read it to her she flew into a rage that I should suggest that she was a sinner. Poor Mother. Dad, for her sake, tried to be indignant too, but I could see he really was interested. Mother and Mrs. James went to see Rev. Daniels about it. They have demanded that he put a stop to it."

"They have?" Lorel's thoughts immediately flew to the defense of Don, although all the day she herself had been condemning him. "Well, they preach enough about religious tolerance. Then why should they try to refuse Don that privilege?"

Opal looked gladly at Lorel. "Do you really feel that way, Lo?"

"I don't agree at all with Don or you, but if religious toler-

ance is a quality they profess to acclaim, well, then, why not include Don's belief?"

Mrs. Mason looked quizzically at Lorel. She seemed to be a bundle of contradictions. And this was precisely what Lorel was. She didn't know! She didn't know! She had felt a drawing toward the Lord Jesus since Don's return, but the thought of the new life which seemed to be a part of this salvation, that separated, narrow, consecrated life, was offensive to her.

"Are you giving up wordly pleasures, so called?" Lorel wanted to know.

Opal laughed. "I haven't even thought of them. I've been so busy studying His Word. But if I lose my desire for them, through this new nature of mine, I'll surely let them alone. You know, Lorel, I never was one to do what I didn't like to do. And if God leads me into higher things, I'll gladly follow. No one condemns a doctor or a lawyer, or a professional man, or an athlete, or anyone seeking success in his chosen field if he foregoes wordliness in order to reach it, and yet, if one refuses to waste one's time on these inconsequential things because he has caught a vision of eternal glory, he is immediately branded a fool. The more I think of it, the more I am sure such shallow ungratifying pastimes would bore me."

Lorel was astounded. This was directly contrary to Opal's beliefs previous to last night. How could anyone be so completely turned about in one day? For a moment she had a fleeting hope that, after her ardor had cooled, Opal would again become normal. This hope vanished almost as soon as it was born when Lorel remembered Opal's own account of her cousins' obstinancy. "You seem to have turned right-about-face, Opal," she commented coldly.

Opal took up the words with an advantage. "That's exactly what I did do, Lorel. I was traveling against the light of God's revelation. Did you ever travel down a road, against the headlights of an automobile? You know how they blind you. But, if you turn and go the same way, the light behind you lights up your path and you see the way clearly. Just so, in rebelling against God, the light blinded me, but

when, last night, I turned right-about-face and told God I was willing to go His way, the same light that had previously blinded me became my guiding light. I see things I never saw before. Right-about-face is exactly what conversion is. That's why you immediately know the change has taken place. Your view, your path, your plans are exactly opposite to what they were before. And with the light of God behind you, you clearly see the right way. Regardless of what those still traveling against the light say, they have no power to convince you, because you realize they are blind, even as you once were."

"Did you know Ben was saved last night after you left?"

"Ben? Ben Jackson? Really, Lorel? Well, praise the Lord!"

Lorel wondered at Opal's familiarity with the Christian's vernacular, as she thought of it, until she remembered again the Southern cousins. No doubt, she reflected, they had had more influence over Opal than she herself realized. And the Southern cousins, when, at last, they heard the good news rejoiced in the answer to their prayers and in the knowledge that God's call had not been in vain in the case of Opal. Yes, indeed, those cousins had had a great deal to do with Opal's conversion.

"Yes. After you left, he came back, and he and Don went to the study. At least, Don says he was converted. I wouldn't know."

"Oh, Lorel, honey, don't be so rebellious. It's sweet to meet Jesus. Don't fight against it so hard."

Mrs. Mason had been holding her lips in a straight line for so long that they positively ached. Now, to show her displeasure she rose. "If you girls will excuse me, I will go in."

"Certainly," both responded.

"But I must be going too. It's nearly supper time, and Mother will be waiting for me. Good-by. See you in church." And Opal was gone.

Mrs. Mason sighed deeply. "Is this to be the subject of our conversation for the rest of our days? Oh, Lorel, why ever did this strange religion have to enter in and disturb the

tranquillity of our lives? I do declare, I even dwell on it when I'm alone, and I'm weary of it!"

"Weary of what, my darling?" Mr. Mason, coming around from the back of the house, wanted to know.

"Weary of thinking. I want you to find some place to take me, where I can forget all about myself and get my mind on something else."

"A double feature at the Grand. By the time you live through the lives of two different sets of people, you will have forgotten your own problems."

"Yes. I'll hurry supper along so we can get there early."

And so, by make-believe, they would attempt to put from their hearts the pleading voice of God, who offered freely, in love, the gift of eternal life to all who would enter in through the Door, Jesus Christ.

XIV

THAT night, when Don called, Lorel was a vision of loveliness. Because the night was cool, she wore her new black velvet dress, touched with gold at the belt and the throat, and her golden beads. At sight of her Don's rather mournful expression turned into a glad smile.

"Mmm, your dress is pretty. When did you get it?"

"The other night. You know, when I wouldn't let you come over."

"It's almost worth that lonely evening to see you so ravishing. Mother and Dad out?"

"Yes. To a movie." Now was the time to suggest the dance, but, somehow, she couldn't say the words. She was impatient with herself. All through the late afternoon she had been devising various methods of introducing the subject. Now she silently allowed the propitious moment to pass.

"Would you like to go to Ken and Gay's tonight? Ken

called just before I left. They're delighted with the waffle iron we gave them for their wedding gift, and Ken says Gay wants us to be the first to have some waffles."

There was no alternative. She couldn't refuse Gay's invitation. On the way to the apartment Lorel asked, "Have you heard that Mrs. Grey called on Rev. Daniels?"

"Yes, I have. He called on me this afternoon and asked for my resignation."

"Donny! Not really?"

"Yes, really. From the Young Peoples' meetings, that is. He said he'd welcome me at the morning services, however."

"Oh, Don, I think that's awful. After all, what have you done to be asked to resign?"

"It seems division always follows whenever Christ enters a heart, Lorel. Jesus said that a man's foes would be even of his own household."

"That seems to me directly contrary to what Christ ought to do."

"Well, we can't serve God and mammon. You can see, if one switches over to service for Christ, there is a natural division. There's bound to be, until the other chooses Christ too."

Trembling inwardly, Lorel put the question. "Then how could we find happiness in marriage, Don?"

He did not answer for some time. At last, with tears in his voice, he replied, "We couldn't, Lorel. Not until you, too, can say, 'Take the world, but give me Jesus.' That's why I wish you would try to believe whatever the Word says. I know your own inclinations are against it, but won't you try, Lorel—try to believe whatever the Word says?"

Lorel felt that she could not possibly exist without Don. If this thing really meant so much to him, she decided she would try, just to please him.

"I will, Don. I promise I will," she assured him, as he rang the bell for admittance to the new apartment.

After having duly admired and praised to the limit every possession of Ken's and Gay's, they began reminiscing—that first day, when Gay and Ken met, the picnic day, and others, in which Lorel and Don had had no part. Don felt envious

when he thought of how quickly their courtship had culminated. Seeing them so extravagantly happy intensified his longing for the day when he and Lorel would be married. And yet he would not want to miss entering the Institute, either.

After a time, Ken and Don followed the girls into the kitchen, where Gay proceeded to make waffles. Each of them was assigned some particular task. Ken, pouring the maple syrup into the pretty little pitcher, was so engrossed with his account of what he had told the janitor that he didn't realize he had overestimated its capacity until a little puddle had formed on the table. Just as it was about to drip onto the floor, Lorel shrieked, and the catastrophe was averted.

Gay poured the first portion of the batter onto the iron. They "ah'd" and "oh'd," waiting for the first mouthful of promised deliciousness. Unable to wait the required three minutes, each in turn raised the cover to see what was taking place inside. When the time was up, they found, to their amazement, that nothing would pry the waffle loose from its resting place. Finally, with forks and brushes and what not, they succeeded in removing the sorry-looking waffle from the iron.

The next time, Gay, on guard, refused to allow any interference. Nibbling on the remains of the previous attempt satisfied them, however, for it tasted much better than it looked.

When the second waffle also stuck as its predecessor had, Gay actually burst into tears. Her first effort to entertain! And she had boasted so much about her waffles!

Ken was heartsick at her distress, and made matters worse by declaring vehemently, "I don't believe that old iron is any good."

Immediately, he remembered that the donors were present, and his expression of combined embarrassment, justification, and condolence was so funny that it brought gales of laughter from Lorel and Don. When Ken saw that, through her tears, Gay's eyes were beginning to twinkle too, he joined in the merriment. He swung Gay, gayly about, singing, "Who's afraid of the big waffle iron? We'll lick him yet!"

That, however, was an empty boast, for, just as they made a graceful turn, Ken's elbow came in contact with the batter bowl and sent it crashing down on the hitherto spotless floor. For a moment, they gazed at the wreckage in complete silence. Then they fell into uncontrollable paroxysms of laughter.

Ken, who had made a hasty exit when the cleaning up process began, reappeared with two paper containers filled with chop suey and rice. He extracted hot buns from another bag, and the hungry four sat down to the substitute spread, commenting wittily on the bride's delicious chop suey. It was better than any Chinaman could make, they assured her. Gay thanked them graciously for their appreciation.

Lorel and Don, departing, envied Gay and Ken their privilege to be with each other always. But new hope lived within the hearts of both of them. Lorel had not seen Don so much like his old self since his return from Wisconsin. Perhaps, after all, she told herself, his religious development was but a passing fancy.

Don, on the other hand, was remembering Lorel's promise of the early evening. He knew that, if she really was willing, Christ would enter her heart and transform her life. And so they said good-night, each one trusting that the other would soon be won over. They laughed together, remembering the tragedy of the waffles. Lorel assured Don that she would begin to practice making waffles that week, so that she would know how by the time they had their little home. Don left, his heart in some measure gladdened with the thought of Lorel united to him in marriage and in Christian fellowship. But, deep down, lingered the sorrow that men and women should reject his blessed Lord.

XV

SUNDAY morning found the boys in Ben's class eagerly gazing at the door, hoping for Don's entrance. When Ben entered, each boy was disappointed, even the boy who hadn't been there last Sunday but who had been told by the others about Jesus coming in power and glory.

Ben, however, greeted them with a wider smile than ever before he had given them. The boys responded to it as a flower does to the sun. They knew too much of frowning disapproval not to be enthralled with a friendly smile.

"Say, do you know what?" began one. "Jesus is coming again. Did you know that?" And all corroborated his statement with nodding heads and wide, joyous eyes.

"Sure," added another, "they got the best of Him last time, but you just wait and see what He'll do next time! He'll have more power then, I'll betcha."

Ben himself did not know very much about the second coming of Christ as yet, but since Christ was dwelling in his heart by faith he had learned quite a lot about His first coming and His death and resurrection. So he replied, "He had just as much power the first time, Billy, but there's a reason why He didn't use it. I'll tell you all about it in class."

This bit of mystery whetted the boys' longing to hear more about Christ. When lesson time came they all asked, in almost the same words, "Then why did He die?"

So Ben told them about the glories and the power that had been Christ's in the presence of the Father and the angels. He told of the yearning love God had for man, who was powerless to save himself from the wages of sin, which is death. He told how Jesus, in love, came down to earth, purposing to die for man; to bear the penalty of sin for him and then freely to give eternal life to all who would come to Him. If Christ had not died, man could never have the privilege of knowing God or of entering Heaven. Jesus had given Himself a ransom for many.

This put the matter in a different light altogether. If any thought had been given to Christ and His death by these

boys, it had been with a vague feeling of disappointment in their hearts. In their radio and movie stories they were accustomed to a hero victoriously overcoming all odds. The very fact that Jesus had suffered defeat had detracted from His fascination. But now to learn that He could have saved Himself, but at the cost of the rest of the world, lifted Him high above the esteem they felt for any favorite hero, real or fictional. Of course, there were others who had laid down their lives for friends, for nations, or for causes. But Jesus had done it for His enemies! While we were yet sinners Christ died for us because He loved us so. Each boy felt a tightening about his heart strings, and a new love for that Man of Calvary.

After Sunday school was dismissed, Opal asked Ben, "Is it true, Ben? Are you saved too?"

"Yes, I am. It seems too good to be true."

"Well, a river never dries up unless its source does, and the source of our joy is Jesus, so I guess it'll last as long as He does."

Ben looked at Opal with admiration. "You surely do see things, Opal. And we won't have to worry about Jesus the source ever failing, will we?"

In wonder, Lorel noticed their compatibility. Before, they had addressed each other only in monosyllables, and then only when necessary.

Don had not been to Sunday school. From her seat in the choir, Lorel noticed him come into church. She noticed, too, the disdainful glance Mrs. James gave him as she turned to him with the sole purpose of showing him her scorn.

The service began and progressed with the usual precision. It did not differ in one iota from all the others.

Rev. Daniels announced that his text, though short, was filled with import. It was found in Ephesians, second chapter, verses twenty-one and twenty-two. "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God."

Men, Rev. Daniels averred, were the habitation of God. All were brothers, and God the father of all. Mohammedans,

Buddhists, Confucianists, Christian Scientists—all creeds were included in this category, and all were divine. In the soul of every man dwelt a spark of divinity. The spark, through selfishness and wrongdoing, might be almost smothered. On the other hand, by kindness, unselfish service to the church, liberal giving, and moral living, that spark might be fanned into a glowing flame. He closed with an admonition to his hearers to be ever on guard to discover little ways in which to fan into greater flame the divinity within them.

The words had been well chosen and well spoken. They had awakened within more than one hearer a desire to enhance his divinity.

Now, as, according to custom, the organ was beautifully and softly played in order that a short time might be spent in solemn meditation, Don sat, his eyes glued on the open Bible before him, his heart bleeding.

How, oh how, could anyone so distort the written Word? And all these people, because the minister had read a few words from it, believed whatever interpretation he put on it.

Don's eyes fell to the salutation to the Ephesians. This epistle was addressed "to the saints and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." It was not written to every man. No man had in him a spark of divinity, or was he the habitation of God, unless that letter was addressed to him, unless he was faithful in Christ Jesus.

Don read the first verses of the very chapter from which the pastor had quoted: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, . . . fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

How definitely God spoke of children of wrath. How definitely he showed the difference between His children and those who were by nature the children of disobedience. How definitely He designated which were His habitation—"For through Him we both have access by one spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are *no more* strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apos-

bles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."

It was through Him, Jesus Christ, and upon Him and in Him that one became a member of the household of God, and His habitation.

But none of these people knew that. Not one looked in his Bible. They trusted their souls' destiny to the words of a man. As long as he took just one sentence from the wealth of God's Word and interpreted it for them, however erroneously, they were satisfied. They prided themselves that their pastor preached from the Bible, but they never searched the Scriptures to see if these things were so.

Jane Dennison walked with Lorel and Don on their way home. She gave much advice to Lorel on business etiquette. On Monday Lorel was to take over Gay's duties at the office. She was quite nervous about it, and plied Jane with many questions. At the corner where stood Lorel's home Jane turned off.

As the two neared her house, Lorel spoke. "There now, you see! You heard what Rev. Daniels said. We are all divine. That spark of divinity dwells in each human heart. Doing good fans it into flame, and doing evil lulls it to sleep. Nevertheless, it is there; we are all brothers and God is the Father of us all. That's what I believe, and I'm glad I do. This message has done me good, and reassured me. I was almost beginning to believe you might be right. But, after hearing so intellectual a minister explain it, I am sure it is you who are wrong."

"Why will men believe men, rather than God?" Don asked hoarsely. "Jesus said, 'Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. He that is of God heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.'"

Lorel's cheeks flamed. Her eyes flashed. "Donald Coever, do you mean to stand there and tell me I am of the devil? How dare you insult me so? How dare you?"

Firmly he grasped both her hands in his, and, with a broken voice, said, "But as many as received him, to them

gave he the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.' It's a privilege, a benefit, an advantage only for those who receive Him, who acknowledge their need of the Saviour, and who acknowledge Him as their Lord; that is, surrender to Him their lives, their ambitions, their aims. Oh, Lorel, you sang this song this morning. Won't you say it from your heart, Lorel, instead of from your lips only?"

And he repeated the entire verse:

"Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow Thee
Destitute, despised, forsaken,
Thou from hence my all shall be.
Perish every fond ambition,
All I've sought and hoped and known;
Yet, how rich is my condition—
God and heaven are still my own."

Lorel drew away. The words cut her to the heart. She had sung them along with the rest of the congregation time and time again. The melody was a peculiarly haunting one, and she loved it. But, until this moment, the full meaning of the words had never pierced her mind. Well, she would not be a hypocrite. She would never sing it again!

Her anger flamed against Don for pointing her hypocrisy out to her. What could she say to hurt him?

"You are so melodramatic. You have missed your calling. You should be an actor. At least, it would be more remunerative." With stinging contempt she uttered the words.

Humbly Don answered, "I never could be an actor. I would never be content to play make-believe. Realities are too precious to me—the reality of Jesus Christ to my soul, the reality of heaven and hell, and the love of God who has made it possible for me to be a son of His—a joint heir with Christ, through faith in Him."

"Well, then,"—Lorel tried to say it lightly, but there was a tremble in her voice—"since you are so grand, a son of God, and I a child of the devil, I think this had better be the parting of our ways. Here is your ring. Perhaps you will

find a fanatic like yourself who will wear it. As for me, a child of the devil, I must be about my wicked ways."

And thrusting the ring into his hand, she ran up to her room, where she threw herself on the bed, and gave way to tears.

Don did not call her back. What could he say to her? Only that what he had said before was true, that he loved her? Yes, oh yes. But that could not solve their problem. From the shelter of the thick foliage he looked up into the cloud-festooned sky, and, with unshed tears, said softly, "Oh, Lord Jesus, I know the fellowship of your sufferings. I love her so, Lord, if it be possible, let this cup pass. Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done."

And as he walked away, with his heart breaking, he was conscious of the sound of a voice saying, "When thou goest through the deep waters I will be with thee."

XVI

WHEN Lorel did not answer the call to dinner, Mrs. Mason entered her room, to find her lying on the bed, eyes red from weeping, but with her tears exhausted.

"Lorel," she cried in alarm, "Lorel, darling, whatever is the matter?"

Wearily, Lorel answered. "I've broken my engagement, Mother."

"Broken your engagement! Whatever do you mean?" And as the realization came to her she smiled. A lovers' quarrel. Well, that would soon be patched up. "Now, honey, don't you cry. Don will be here this afternoon, all apologetic, and then all these tears will have been in vain."

For a moment, Lorel dwelt upon this possibility, and it seemed sweet to her. Then remembering what Don had said, she protested, "No, he won't, and even if he did, I'd never forgive him, Mother, for what he said to me. And

worst of all, Mother, he meant it. We could never be happy so long as he's so stubborn."

Then, in detail, Lorel told her mother, almost word for word, what they had said to each other. Every word was etched forever in her heart and mind. When she had finished, Mrs. Mason realized the seriousness of the quarrel. She very angry with Don. How dared he insinuate that he was too good for her Lorel!

Mr. Mason, coming into the room to learn why dinner was delayed, had to be told the entire story. Somehow, he immediately sensed the gravity of the situation.

"This is not a trifling matter to Don. It may take weeks before he realizes he is too devout. But, Lorel, he loves you so deeply, sooner or later he will admit that you are more precious to him than any creed. You must wait until that time comes."

Mrs. Mason, woman wise, wondered what people would say. "At least, Lorel, no one in the church will blame you. It's a good thing they all found out Friday night how fanatical Don is. Above all, don't lose your dignity, Lorel, and don't let anyone know you are waiting for him. Pretend it is all over so far as you are concerned. Now, freshen up a bit, dear, and we'll try to have dinner."

At Don's home, Mr. Coever noting the stark tragedy of his eyes, questioned gently, "What is it, son?"

Don could not speak. He took the ring from his pocket and showed it to his father.

"Because of Christ?"

Don nodded. "I guess I was too blunt. Oh, Dad, I'm such a failure. I thought I would win her to Him so easily. I thought she would love Him as soon as she knew it. He's so wonderful and she's so sweet, it must have been my fault. But, Dad, how can I give her up? There'll never be anyone else for me."

"Do you remember what you told me once, Donny boy? 'I think it would have been easier, Dad, if you had said, "Not my will, but thine." He would have comforted you.'"

Don remembered. "It's true, it will be easier, yielding my-

self to His will. And, Dad, I won't blame Him. I'll trust, though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."

Don kept to his room all day. When his father asked him to go for a drive with him in the evening, he answered, "Do you mind, if I don't, Dad?"

"No, son, but I think you would feel better."

"Thanks, Dad, but I just can't."

He supposed his father had gone, and the quietness seemed unbearable. He would have to get out and walk. Entering the living room, he found his father on his knees in prayer. He knew it was for him. For a moment he thought of falling there beside him, but suddenly turned and went out.

He walked in the direction opposite that which he usually took. All the affairs of his life, it seemed, took him to the north. Now he walked south. Walking again down the street filled with playing children reminded Don of his walk with Lorel just those few short weeks ago when he had told her he would enter the Institute. The fact that it was Sunday seemed to make little difference. If any were at church their number was not missed. Up in that little Wisconsin town Sunday night found the streets practically deserted. Of course, the world would argue that a lack of pleasures forced them to attend church, but Don knew the reason was that Christ so attracted them that they could not stay away.

Why didn't they have church services in Chicago at night? They had tried to have them at their church a few times, but the services had been so poorly attended that they had dispensed with them. The world offered too much competition on Sunday night. Even the Sunday morning services during the summer were very poorly attended. But on winter Sunday mornings, when the world offered no attraction, the people came to church.

Purposely, Don found things to think about. Resolutely he tried to bury his crushing sorrow in the center of his soul.

Suddenly he was conscious of singing. The next moment a passing street car drowned out all other sound. When it had gone, the sound of singing came louder and clearer. Turning his head toward the sound, Don found himself

directly across the street from a place which bore the name, GOSPEL TABERNACLE. Neat curtains at the huge windows shut those inside from view. There were Neon signs in each of the windows. One bore the words, "Jesus Saves" and the other, "Jesus Lives."

Passers-by smiled as they saw Don stop short and stare at the sight as if it were a miracle. As if, in all the city of Chicago, such a place could not possibly be. He started across the street, forgetful of the traffic until the angry toot of an automobile horn reminded him of his location.

Entering the door, Don was aware first of the man on the platform leading the singing. That man, though singing and leading, nodded and gave him a beaming smile. At the same moment, a young man to his right offered him a song book turned to the proper page, shook hands with him, and ushered him to a seat about half way up toward the front.

Another song was sung, and Don reveled in that same ringing sincerity he had heard in the voices of the Wisconsin people. After that, the leader called on Brother Bob to come and lead the testimonies.

Testimonies! Don's soul had the feeling of one sitting down to a feast. Testimonies! He was about to hear testimonies! Hurry, oh, hurry. He couldn't wait to hear them!

And sure enough, a little old man with white hair rose and told, with throbbing voice, of the sweetness of the Lord after sixty years of walking with Him. A young man, a young woman, a little girl, an elderly dignified man, a jovial, young man, a soft-spoken widow, a young mother, an old mother—one by one, they rose and told of Jesus and His love, of the blessedness of sins forgiven, of victories won, of prayers answered, of needs met, of a burden or a blessing they wished to share.

Don found himself standing. "Oh, I'm so glad I'm here. I didn't know there was a place like this in Chicago. I didn't know there were so many who knew and loved the Lord Jesus Christ. He is worthy of praise, and tonight from the bottom of my heart I can say, I know 'He doeth all things well.' "

Don rejoiced at the informality as the testimony leader wel-

comed him. "We're glad you found us, brother. Have you just come to Chicago?"

And Don replied from his seat, as if it were a home gathering rather than a church meeting with rules and regulations that must be followed, "Oh, no, I've lived here all my life. But I never met the Lord until I found Him in a little gathering just like this in Wisconsin. I thought there were only formal churches in Chicago. I live less than a mile from here." He spoke joyously.

"Well, you are very welcome. Come again. Come often."

Don decided he would do that very thing. Every song, every testimony, every word of the message was a blessing to his heart. Just before the close, a mother and her daughter sang:

"Farewell, ye dreams of night—Jesus is mine.
Lost in this dawning bright—Jesus is mine.
All that my soul has tried, left but a dismal void—
Jesus has satisfied—Jesus is mine."

As he listened to them, Don found the congestion in his soul breaking up. Gradually the tightness loosened, and breathing seemed easier. Through the darkness, the thick darkness, a tiny ray of light found its way and dispelled his anguish as it filled him with peace—that peace which passeth understanding—the peace that Jesus gives.

XVII

THE months following saw vast changes in the lives of both Don and Lorel. Lorel, entering business, was glad for every moment that kept her mind occupied. For the moment her thoughts were released from all demands, they flew back with poignant longing and desire to Don.

Mr. and Mrs. Mason, with aching hearts, saw her grow womanly through her sorrow. Of course, Lorel herself often

spoke of the subduing influence office duties had on a girl's character. At times, Mrs. Mason was almost convinced that that was the reason for the sedate walk, the little smile that took the place of the merry laughter, and Lorel's increased desire to stay at home rather than to be out with the young people.

Now it was Hilda with whom Lorel became fast friends. Opal, on learning that Don had been requested to resign from the church, had sent in her own resignation, much to her mother's chagrin. Hilda told Lorel that Opal had begun attending a mission place of some kind to which Don also went. It was just a little store-effect church. Ben Jackson continued to teach his Sunday-school class, but he, too, Hilda understood, attended "that place" on Sunday evenings.

Lorel visited Gay as little as she could without seeming rude. Gay was loud in her denunciation of Don and his obstinacy. Her tirades against him, instead of consoling Lorel, only succeeded in tearing open the wounds in her heart. She had a strange desire to defend Don.

Her main reason for staying away, however, was because it was so difficult for her to see the happiness in Gay's eyes over her own important position as a wife. It was difficult to see Ken look at Gay so adoringly, and to see Gay, in turn, try to keep her own response to Ken hidden from Lorel's eyes, knowing how their joy in each other hurt her.

Then there were times when Lorel couldn't stay away. When within her burned a desire to hear some word regarding Don. Where was he? What was he doing? Visiting Gay, she knew she would hear something about him.

At Christmas time Mrs. Mason arranged a party for Lorel and surprised her with it. It was the first gay event she had had a part in since she and Don had parted.

Glen, who had been carefully waiting his time, took possession of her that night as only he could, and led every one present to believe that Lorel looked favorably on him. His possessiveness, his joviality, the laughter of the crowd seemed to be driving Lorel mad. She wanted to run away, to hide, to be alone. But every now and then she found her mother watching her anxiously.

Lorel knew the hope her mother had, that with the gayety of young people's society she would again find girlishness and happiness and forgetfulness. With renewed tensity she forced herself to be gay. As ever, Glen, with his utter lack of perception, accepted her counterfeit merriment as an indication of her regard for him. So well did she conceal her distaste, however, that Glen could not be blamed this time for his self-satisfaction. For even Gay, with her facility for quick understanding, supposed that, at last, Lorel was free of haunting memories.

Because she couldn't bear to see the hurt look of her mother, if she should learn of the torture to which she had subjected her daughter that night, Lorel accepted Glen's invitation to attend the New Year's dance.

Before retiring, she told her mother of it, so that she might not guess how vain had been the party. Alone in her room, bitter tears wet her pillow while she almost savagely bit her fingers to keep any sound from her parents. She knew that they were quietly exulting in their room. She knew they were comparing Glen with Don, and were determinedly finding much in Glen's favor. Poor dears! She would be so content with business and her home and their companionship, if only they would not mind so much.

That was the beginning of her renewed friendship with Glen. It became increasingly difficult to refuse him dates because of his insistence, and because of the happy light in her mother's eyes whenever she went with him.

They were all deceived, so successfully had Lorel buried her heart. Then, one day in February, Gay discovered her secret.

Sitting comfortably in Gay's living room, Lorel tried to persuade her to accompany them that night to the roller-skating rink. Gay demurred. Lorel was insistent. She felt she could stand Glen's company that night only if someone were with them to divert the personal trend his conversation always took when they were alone.

Perplexed, Lorel watched Gay's cheeks turn a lovely pink as she lowered her eyes.

"I don't think I'd better, Lo. The doctor would not advise it."

"The doctor! You haven't been ill, have you, Gay!"

"No, but, oh, Lorel—" Gay looked up at her, the deep joy of anticipation glowing in her excited eyes.

For a moment more Lorel was bewildered. Then she understood. "You, Gay, really!"

Gay expected Lorel to be overjoyed with the news. She was astounded when Lorel lay her head on the arm of the chair and gave way to uncontrolled weeping. Her shoulders shook convulsively, and the sobs came louder and louder.

After the first shock, Gay understood; but she did not say a word until the tears had ceased. Then Lorel sat up straight. But the effort seemed too much. With a little sigh, she rested her head on the back of the chair, exposing her tear-stained face and the deep misery in her eyes.

"You still care for Don?"

Lorel nodded, almost imperceptibly.

"I always will."

"Oh, that Don! I wish I could shake some sense into him!"

"Let's forget him, Gay. I'm really very happy about you. I can hardly wait."

"Neither can I," laughed Gay. "Look here," and she took from the little footstool in the corner of the room Annabelle, the doll on which she had lavished all her maternal love and care. "I had to get her out, and I play with her sometimes when the waiting seems too long."

"How long must you wait?"

"Until August. It seems an eternity. Would you like to see some of the—things!"

"Already? Oh, yes."

And so together, fingering the soft, white dainty things in hushed and reverent tones, they discussed this new and most exciting event, one moment with wonder and a trace of fear, and the next with courage and confidence.

That evening Gay asked, "Why doesn't Don ever come up, Kenny!"

"He's so busy. Every minute he's away from the Institute he goes to that tabernacle."

"Well, I wish he'd come up some time. Can't you ask him to?"

Ken laid his paper down and looked at her squarely. "What's up?"

"Nothing. I'd like to see him, that's all."

"Did Lorel say that she'd like to?"

"No. But, oh, Ken, she still cares for him. I thought that if we could ask them here together some night just seeing one another again might break his resistance. Lorel is so beautiful, Ken."

"We might just start a peck of trouble. Lo seems pretty much taken up with Glen. Why not leave well enough alone?"

"She doesn't care for him at all. We could at least try. Then, if nothing comes of it, we'll forget it."

"O.K., if you think it's wise. I told Don the last time I saw him that Lorel and Glen were going steady."

"Ken, did you? What did he say?"

Ken cleared his throat. "He said, 'I'm glad she's happy.' But anyone with half an eye could have seen it was like a sword to his heart."

"See, Ken, he loves her and she loves him. Let's at least try to make somebody as happy as we are."

"That's impossible. How could anyone who didn't have you be happy?"

"Silly!"

Then he rose and came to her. He took the bit of sewing from her hands, laid it aside, and took her back with him to his easy chair. He turned out the light and held her in his arms, forgetting the while the problems of everyone else as they planned and dreamed of the future, when little Joy would be with them.

XVIII

IT WAS Saturday night. Gay was all a flutter. "Now, don't forget, Ken. You tell him you'd like to read him a passage from H. G. Wells that you found and ask him to explain it. He'll be sure to come if he thinks he'll have a chance to argue religion. But don't let on that I expected you back. I told Lorel you'd be out and I didn't want to be alone. Regardless of the consequences, don't give it away that we planned it. And if its successful right before our very eyes, don't get that pleased-with-myself expression."

"Why, you little minx!" And why shouldn't I be pleased with myself, and if I am, why shouldn't I let everyone know it. An inferiority complex is more detrimental than a superiority complex, anyway."

"Forget the philosophy. We'll pretend this is a movie take. You're to act as if you are an innocent bystander and not a partner to the crime. Oh, Kenny, I'm so excited. Now go and don't get back too late, please. I'll be a nervous case if you do."

Shortly after Ken's departure, Lorel came. Gay noted Lorel's attire with deep satisfaction. She was wearing her dubonnet velvet, and her hair in an adorable upsweep.

"It's turning colder and windy. We may have a snow-storm." Lorel's eyes were bright. "Where did Ken go?"

Gay's heart raced madly as she announced calmly and almost indifferently, "To Uncle Ray's. Was Glen peeved because I had shanghaied you for the evening?"

"A little. He insisted on calling for me later, though. Said he'd be here about eleven."

If the requirement for success in a movie take is to utterly hide one's true emotions and portray those that one doesn't feel, Gay would have come through honorably.

She seemed amused. "How nice. That means I won't have to loan you Ken for a safe journey home."

"That's what I thought, and so I agreed."

After about an hour's conversation, the bell rang shrilly.

"I wonder if Ken is back already," said Gay as she hastened

to push the electric button that opened the downstairs door.

Lorel, sitting there with a smile to greet Ken, was first aware of his voice—Don's voice. "Hello there, Gay, and how are you? I haven't seen you for so long."

"Why, Don, this is a surprise. Come in."

Don stepped from the inner corrdior into the living room and found himself face to face with Lorel.

Lorel, having had that moment of warning, had been able to collect her scattered thoughts and to lock up tightly the tumult in her heart. In the past months she had become adept at that sort of thing.

But Don had had no warning. He stood there, beholding her, amazed. Yes, it was Lorel. Just as she looked in that picture in his room. Only, in the picture, her hair didn't shine like silk. In the picture her eyes weren't so blue or brilliant; her cheeks weren't so pink and velvety; her lips didn't break into a smile like that, and open and say graciously, "Why, hello, Don. What a surprise to see you here!"

Before an answer could be expected, Ken came to the rescue. "Why, Lorel, are you here? Don and I were going to look up some dried-up facts to argue about, but now that you're here, we'd better have a social time, instead."

"Oh no, don't let me keep you from your purpose. Go right ahead."

This had given Don time to pray. And now, with a strength that was given from above, he acknowledged Lorel's greeting. "Yes, it is a surprise, Lorel—a pleasant one. It's good to see you again. And how are"—a moment's hesitation—"Mother and Dad?"

"Oh, just the same as ever. Those two are inseparable." She smiled affectionately.

"They are a grand exception to the popular belief that marriage can't bring enduring happiness, aren't they?"

"Well, look at Gay and me," exclaimed Ken. "We're still happy."

And laughter again relieved taut nerves.

Gay rejoiced. It had begun well. They seemed to be almost on their old footing. But Gay didn't know that Lorel was as good at acting as she was. She didn't know that be-

hind that calm reserve was a veritable whirlwind of happy memories that seemed to tear in shreds again the heart that Lorel had for so many months been attempting to mend.

"How do you like school, Don?"

"The Institute? It's marvelous. I'm gaining a deep knowledge of eternal things and find the subject the most interesting I have ever studied."

He seemed so calm, so poised, so satisfied—almost happy. True, he seemed years older, even as she herself seemed to him. It might have been years since last they had seen one another, so vastly had each altered. Don, asking her questions regarding her business life, felt welling in him an intense desire for the sweet intimacy they had once known, to call her endearing names, to feel again the softness of her cheek against his.

On entering the Institute he had taken with him a hope of still winning Lorel to the Lord and for himself. He had continued to pray for her salvation and continued to hope that some day she would be his, until the few short weeks before this, when Ken had told him of Lorel's and Glen's friendship. Bitter jealousy had again besieged him, and it had taken again the outpouring of his heart before the Throne of Grace to eliminate it. Finally, through the power of the Holy Spirit, he had stilled his envy. But left in its place was an aching void that not even his intense study and Christian joy could completely fill.

Now, as they sat and talked of trivial things in this place which had ever intensified Don's desire to have a home with Lorel presiding in it, he felt confused. But, even as the other three, he played his part well, and no one guessed his state of mind. Would Lorel be willing to reestablish the old relationship? No, he could not ask it. He himself, though missing her almost beyond endurance, had recognized how free he was without her in the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment. This was indeed precious to him. He realized more than ever the trinity of man—body, soul, and spirit. With all his physical being he wanted her, with all his soul he longed for her companionship, the culture and ability to appreciate all beauty that was hers. But in his spirit he knew her very

presence would be a hindrance to him spiritually. How definitely his triune being asserted itself.

For a time Gay was delighted, but after a while even she realized that something was missing. The conversation never lagged, but it lacked depth, and had a superficial sound. She wondered at it, and, finally, knew that both Don and Lorel were speaking with their lips only, that their hearts were sealed.

Almost in tears, she prepared a little supper for them. When she summoned Ken to assist her, Lorel and Don were left alone.

For a moment Lorel and Don felt that the barrier of pretense would melt away. But, with a valiant effort, each succeeded in quickly rebuilding it.

"I haven't seen Opal for sometime. I hear she attends your church."

"Yes, she's quite active there. You know Opal. She finds her place and fills it completely."

Lorel noticed the admiration in Don's voice and in a flash the thought was born. Had he found in Opal what he desired in a life companion? The more she thought of it, the more possible it seemed. And if this were the case, she would want him to think that she, too, had found her desire in someone else. She was searching for some reason to bring Glen into the conversation without making it too obvious, when Ken brought in the table and set it up beside them. Gay followed, carrying a tray loaded with tiny sandwiches and crunchy raspberry tarts.

This diverted the conversation to Ken and Gay and their affairs. Gay, knowing that Glen would call for Lorel at eleven, had purposely served the little repast early. When ten-thirty neared, she anxiously watched the clock, hoping that in some way they could induce Don to leave before Glen came. She thought of asking Lorel to remain for the night, hoping that, Lorel, realizing her intention, would accept. Just as she was about to frame the words, however, the bell rang noisily. Gay started so, that she spilled her chocolate.

"Why, Gay, I didn't know that you were so nervous." Then, answering the insistent ring, they all heard Ken say,

"Glen? Glen Hubbard? Oh, sure, come right up." Then returning, "It's Glen. Can you imagine that?"

"Oh, yes, he's calling for me. He didn't want me to have to walk alone." Lorel purposely injected into the statement the thought of Glen's extreme care for her.

Glen entered noisily, but stopped short as he saw the cozy group about the little table. His eyes narrowed as he recognized Don, and an ugly expression crept about his lips. All his displeasure vanished at Lorel's greeting, however.

"You're early, Glen, dear. That's good. Now you can join us in a cup of piping hot chocolate before we start walking home through the cold."

"Cold is right! A blizzard is coming up, I think. But don't worry about walking through it, Lorel. I bought a new car today. Never could have Dad's as much as I wanted it, so I induced him to get me one of my own. Wait till you see her. She's a beauty! Got her in dubonnet to go with that dress, Lorel. Never saw a color more becoming to you. Don't you agree with me, Don? Did you ever see Lorel more stunning?"

"Now, Glen, you can't expect everyone to share your enthusiasm," Lorel interrupted.

"Why not? What do you say, Don?" he continued, relentlessly.

With fine poise, Don replied, "Lorel is charming, as she always is. But, personally, I don't think I've ever seen her more beautiful than she is when she wears yellow and brown."

Quickly every mind turned silently back to the picnic day. Glen searched frantically for a reply and found one that bore the sting he intended it should. "Oh, that's all right for juvenile minds. But dubonnet is queenly and mature. Yellow is for puppy love, but regal dubonnet is for true love. And speaking of love, my darling, shall we go? I'll have one of the sandwiches while you get ready, but no chocolate for me. That seems rather juvenile too. Don't see how a man can bide the stuff."

"Say, careful what you say," interrupted Ken. "No slurs on my manhood right here in the home I maintain for my wife."

Glen laughed. "Sorry, old pal. You've got a head start on

me all right, but I'll be catching up with you." He spoke confidently.

He was indeed handsome, tall, well built, expensively attired. As Lorel joined him and stood beside him to say their adieus, no one could help conceding that they were an attractive pair.

Holding her hand out to Don, who had risen when she reëntered the room, Lorel said, with seeming good will but with an utter lack of personal interest, "I hope you'll be very successful in your new pursuits, Don. Send my greetings to Opal and tell her to visit me some time."

"I'll do that, Lorel. Thank you for your kind wishes. It has been nice to see you again. Send my regards to Moth—to your mother and father." He winced when he saw Glen smile at the changed wording of his greeting.

More good nights, and the two were gone after Glen had made certain that Lorel was snugly bundled up so that she would not take cold walking the few steps from the building to the car.

Gay saw the veil of Don's assumed fortitude disappear, and suddenly she burst into tears. Both men looked at her in alarm. Immediately all thought was for her. Don ran to the kitchen for a glass of water, while Ken, with his arms about her, pleaded with Gay to tell him what was wrong. Not until Ken suggested that Don call a doctor, did she regain control of herself.

"No, don't," she commanded between broken sobs. Then, out poured the words in a torrent. "Oh, Don, can you forgive me? I purposely brought you and Lorel together tonight. Don, don't believe what you saw tonight. She doesn't care for Glen. I know she doesn't. She still loves you, Don. Why don't you give up this ridiculous religion of yours and get into the race again? I know you'd have a chance to win, if only you wouldn't be so obstinate. You and Lorel belong to each other. Please, please forget your pride and fight for her. Don't turn her over to Glen as easily as this. Oh, I hate him! He's just going to weary Lorel until she'll finally marry him from sheer exhaustion. Don't let her, Don, please don't."

"I'm afraid you're mistaken, Gay. Her feelings for Glen were very evident. I'm sure she returns his love-affection."

"No, she doesn't, Don. I know! Don, won't you give up your foolish, impractical ideas and get into your father's office and marry Lorel. Surely, she's worth more than just the little reproach you will bear for admitting you were mistaken. Don't let obstinacy ruin your entire life. If you will only give in to her and give her a little fun now, it'll be easy after you are married for her to give up the things all young girls like to do. Why, Ken and I scarcely care to go out with the crowd any more. Lorel will be like that after you are married."

"Little Gay—oh, you don't understand. I can't give up Christ. He's a part of me. He's real. Do you for one moment suppose that I would put a theory, a hypothesis, a hobby before Lorel. No, Gay. I would give up any personal desire for her. But Christ—He's a part of my life—this gift of eternal life which He has given me! And it is mine forever. I could no more put it from me than I could my own heart. He is there to stay, Gay, my dear. Can't you see that the very fact that I can even endure to surrender Lorel to Glen proves how real and precious Christ is to me?"

Gay sighed. "I can't understand it all. Knowing how you love Lorel, I must admit that there must be something very tangible that keeps you from her. But that it should be Christ mystifies me. I never knew He demanded so much of a life. I don't think it's fair that He should."

Sadly, Don shook his head. He couldn't find words to say. Truly, "the natural man could not receive the things of the Spirit. They were foolishness to him."

"You'd better go, Don. I'm afraid this has been too much for Gay. She must get some rest."

"Of course, Ken. I'll go. I'm sorry, Gay, that I've caused you this grief. But forget us, and find happiness in your own life. The years will bring forgetfulness," he said, with a conviction that he did not feel.

Out in the corridor Ken whispered their secret to Don. "That's why I was rude enough to ask you to leave, Don. She really mustn't get excited like this."

Don, walking through the blizzard of that cold March night, was scarcely conscious of the bitter cold. The storm of emotions in him seemed much more furious, much less conquerable. He thought of Ken and Gay attaining the desire of their hearts, that desire which had been his for years, the desire for the rapture of happy marriage. Always, even when he had joined the others in teasing any one of their companions who had been "caught" in the net of matrimony, he had felt a touch of envy. Even before he had loved Lorel he had always longed to have a complete family—father, mother and little boy—the fruition for another little boy of what he himself had missed.

And now Ken, who had been the most positive that he would never be "roped" into the responsibilities of marriage and parenthood, was rejoicing in the fact that he had been.

And Gay's assertion that Lorel still cared for him—was it true? One moment he was filled with gladness at the thought; the next, because of his great love for her, he was filled with despair. Was she suffering even as he was? He didn't want her to know the awfulness of his agony; but he didn't want her to be happy with Glen, either. Oh, he didn't know what it was he wanted. Again he sought the only solace there is for a child of God going through fire—prayer and promises. As ever before, they did not fail him now, the storm in his soul calmed, and he began to believe that even as God had promised, He would bring him unto his "desired haven."

XIX

GLEN never alluded to the incident, nor questioned Lorel regarding Don's presence at the apartment that night. But his demands upon her time were doubled. Glen was exceedingly wise. He sensed Lorel's attitude toward him, and knew that if he were to win her, his principal aid would be Mrs. Mason.

He knew how desperately she wanted Lorel to forget Don. So he furthered his intimacy with the Masons by inviting Mr. and Mrs. Mason along on many of their afternoon drives.

Knowing how empty were the pleasures of music and dancing to an aching heart, Glen deserted these gayeties and took them far out into the country. They stopped at charming inns and restaurants where he ordered for them delicacies they had never before enjoyed. He ignored the crowded, gayly-colored beaches, and found small lakes where they could swim together in solitude. And he brought gifts of flowers and books to Lorel and to Mrs. Mason.

As Lorel noticed how well his campaign was working, and how naturally and affably her parents greeted him on his ever increasing visits, she became afraid, afraid that she would be snared by custom and habit. Several times, without, however, bringing it to a final issue, she had attempted to end this state of affairs. Glen had refused to take her objections seriously.

"Why shouldn't we enjoy the country these spring days, Lorel? I know your mother enjoys them a great deal. You wouldn't want to deprive her of this pleasure, would you?"

"I know, Glen, but—well, I don't like to impose on you this way. I feel that you are giving us too much of your time."

"There's no such thing as imposition among friends, Lorel. I enjoy the outings as much as any of you do. I'm not losing anything."

Glen kept the relationship so impersonal that Lorel found it difficult to put her fear into words. "But, Glen, I—that is, we, you and I are only friends. There—there isn't anything deeper than friendship in your regard, is there?"

"Of course not. And if there ever is to be anything deeper than that friendship would have to be the foundation upon which it is based. So let's forget it. What do you say to an early start to the Mississippi next Sunday morning?"

Lorel felt that, instead of freeing herself from his attention, she had become more entangled in the net.

As the summer came with its heat, Lorel was conscious of an ever-present impatience with everything and everyone. Any little annoyance at the office seemed to unnerve her com-

pletely. When she was with Gay she seemed to feel the strain of impatient waiting as much as Gay did. Her aversion to Glen when she was not with him frightened her with its intensity. But her passive acceptance of his presence frightened her even more.

Mr. and Mrs. Mason, noticing her condition, were deeply anxious about her. They suggested to her that all of them take a vacation for a month at the tiny little lake at which they had spent many a holiday during Lorel's girlhood. At first, Lorel objected; but when pressed for a reason, she could find none, and, remembering that she would be free of Glen for that time, she consented to go.

There, in quietness and peace, she regained her composure. She felt almost as though she were a little girl again. She found the companionship of her mother and father most precious. How willingly, she reflected, she would be content with no more. She decided to try to make them understand. She and her father spent hours together on the shore, swimming, building sand houses, or just talking. They talked long and earnestly, not of business or finance or love, but of the ways of the turtle, the bullfrog, and the toad. Ever after, Lorel was to remember with gladness these intimate moments.

One afternoon, after they had sat in silence watching the sun set behind clouds of red and purple and gold, Mr. Mason spoke. "You're a fine young woman, Lorel."

"It wouldn't be just your parental pride, would it?" she questioned mischievously.

"No, it wouldn't. You really are. I'm proud of your courage."

"Oh, Dad, I have no courage. If you could see deep into my heart sometimes you would know that."

"It's not what is in our hearts that denotes courage, Lorel, but what we do with those emotions. Would you like to tell me what it is that's deep in your heart sometimes?"

"Oh, a fear—a fear of the future."

"Why should you fear the future, Lorel?"

"I don't know why, exactly. I suppose that it's because I'll face it alone some day. That is, if the expected happens—if

you and mother should leave me alone. I wish I had a sister, or someone, Dad."

"Don't you suppose that some day Don will come back to you?"

"I'm sure he won't. Although Opal hasn't said so, I gather from remarks she has made that she and Don are very congenial. Having the same standards, their—marriage"—she choked a little on the word—"would be very appropriate."

"Well, couldn't you find happiness with someone else?"

"Could you have, Dad, if you couldn't have had mother?"

"No, I'm afraid not."

"Neither can I. Don, of course, is definitely out of my life. Even my old longing for him has gone, and with it has gone all desire for romance. And I've determined, Dad, that I must stop seeing Glen. Won't you help me do that when we get back to Chicago? Surely, Dad, you don't think unmarried women are all unhappy, do you?"

"No, of course not, Lorel. For some of them marriage would be a mistake. But you are so like your mother, so completely feminine; so utterly lacking in masculine characteristics that I believe it is the state in which you would be happiest. But, Lorel, if you feel so strongly against Glen, we shall terminate our association as soon as we return. Your mother and I had hoped that he could fill Don's place in your heart. But if he cannot, there's no use to try to force a friendship."

They turned at the call of Mrs. Mason. "A telegram for you, Lorel."

In her haste, Lorel tore the envelope jaggedly and read, "Baby Joy arrived this morning. Sweetest baby you ever saw."

Not by the flicker of an eyelash did Lorel betray the tug at her heart. "Now I am anxious to get back. I had been wondering what in the world would ever lure me away from this tranquillity. But baby Joy—I've got to see her."

Gay was still in the hospital when the Masons returned to the city. Lorel found her way there the first evening of their return. Ken and Gay, and Gay's mother and sister were in the room when she entered. Gay and Ken were beaming.

One would think that never before in all the world had anyone achieved this honor. Gloatingly, Ken accepted Lorel's congratulations and Gay exulted in her pride and happiness.

"Oh, yes, the baby is perfect—adorable—eight pounds, think of that!"

Lorel, noting that she was expected to be surprised at this information, but wondering why, displayed the proper astonishment. Just what was a baby supposed to weigh, anyway? And Delia, Gay's sister, reminded them that both of hers had weighed eight and one-half pounds each. Gay told them of the tendency of Joy's hair to curl, and Delia remembered that Gordon's too had curled, but that Howard's had been straight.

Everyone but Delia could see that these interruptions regarding her children, who were now seven and ten years old, respectively, meant very little to Ken, and that he was more and more provoked with each piece of information she offered. After all, it was his baby that was the center of attraction now. Why did Delia constantly refer to her own children?

They pleaded with the nurse to bring the baby in, but with a firmness that belied her gentleness she absolutely refused. So Ken ushered Lorel through the long corridor to the glass window, where he proudly called for Baby Gleason. Other fathers were there too, proudly displaying their offspring to gaping friends. Each one looked a little pityingly at the others, who had to be content with what had been given them. How fortunate, each thought, that he had been presented with the prettiest baby! All the rest were rather red, squally, and a bit stupid looking.

Ken waited for Lorel's words of praise as the nurse held up for their inspection the little bit of humanity that was baby Joy. She didn't disappoint him. If she had, he would have attributed it to envy, for anyone with half an eye could see that Joy was far superior to all the rest.

Returning, they passed Gay's mother and sister in the hall. They were coming back for one last look at the baby. Ken deserted Lorel and joined them. It was inconceivable that anyone should have the privilege of seeing his baby without his being there too.

Gay looked more dazzling than ever she had at any party, more vivacious, more exultant. "Isn't she beautiful, Lorel?"

"Oh, yes. I can't wait till I get her in my arms though."

"That's what Ken says. He thinks it's awful that these strangers should have so much authority. He says that next time he's going to find a hospital that will recognize his rights as a father."

"I'll be up to see her the day after she comes home."

After Ken returned, Lorel could see that they wanted more than anything else to be alone, and left before the visiting hours were over. "I'm almost dead," she exclaimed. "We just came back this afternoon, you know, and the trip tired me."

With half-hearted protests, they allowed her to leave. As she came down the steps, Lorel saw Opal emerging from a car. She was just about to greet her, when she recognized the young man with her as Don. She drew back, out of sight, but not before she had caught the smile he gave to Opal. Oh, he was dearer than she had remembered, nicer looking, more poised. He had such a calm, restful expression. Had Opal brought that to him? Opal! For a moment the ugly thought returned. Had Opal deliberately professed belief in his religion that she might win him herself? Lorel hurled the thought from her as she would have thrown an adder, knowing it for its own unworthiness.

Poor Lorel! For one fleeting moment she felt that this incident would undo what the many quiet hours at the lake had done for her. She wanted to let herself go and give way to self-pity and weeping. Then she remembered her father's words, "It's not what's in our hearts that denotes courage, but what we do with those emotions." Courage! Courage! She wanted to pray for courage, but had the most awful feeling that she had no right to expect Don's God to hear and answer her prayers. She was angry with Don who had so unwittingly taken this source of strength from her. So she lifted her head high, and deliberately forced Don and Opal, Ken and Gay from her thoughts.

She would think of baby Joy. She would forget that she belonged to Gay and would think of the time she would be

holding her close, of the times she would be listening to her childish prattle, of the times she would be buying her gifts down through the years—the long, endless years.

XX

A DEEP sense of foreboding possessed Lorel one evening, early in September, as she sped home on the suburban northbound train. Why, she couldn't tell. She tried to shake off the vague uneasiness, the feeling of fear that she could not define.

Was it the aftermath of her unpleasant break with Glen? She shuddered as she recalled his reproach. Contrary to his assertions that all he wanted was her friendship and society, he had censured her bitterly for her encouragement. Remembering his ire, she still felt agitated. Nevertheless, it had helped to bring to a definite conclusion their association with one another.

When she reached home she found the door locked. This in itself, although it was unusual, was not terrifying. She felt more fearful when, on entering the house, there was no response to her greeting. In the kitchen she found the orderly disorder of the preparation of a meal. A note in her mother's handwriting was conspicuously placed on the table.

Wonderingly, she read:

"Lorel, dear, do not be frightened, but come to Leighton Park Hospital at once. Daddy has been a little hurt, and so I've gone there in answer to their call. You had already left the office when I received the message and so I could not reach you. I'm sure it cannot be serious. Please eat something before you come."

Daddy hurt? Of course, it couldn't be serious! Why, it was impossible that anything should happen to Dad. She called for a taxi, and then forced herself to obey her mother's injunction to eat something. She managed a sandwich and a glass of milk.

When she arrived at the hospital, a nurse immediately ushered her into a room. Here she found her mother, standing with stricken eyes undimmed by tears.

"Mother! what is it?"

"Lorel, can you be brave?"

It seemed that her little remaining strength left her as she heard those words.

"Lorel, we must not lose control of ourselves. When consciousness returns we must not be weeping. We must be able to smile at Daddy."

Commandeering strength from she knew not where, Lorel replied, "Yes, Mother. But what is it? How did it happen?"

"An automobile going against the red light. A young man just acting smart."

The door opened and the doctor entered. Then, with all the kindness required of his profession, he told them tenderly and sadly that while there was life there was always hope, but that they must be prepared.

"Knowing you as I do, Mrs. Mason and Lorel, I can only ask that for his sake you will remain calm. You will be brave so that your concern will not even be evident when consciousness returns. Any emotional disturbance may be a further hindrance."

A nurse entered and said softly, "Mr. Mason is stirring."

Hurriedly, all three found their way to his room.

In spite of their determination to conceal the shock they knew would be theirs on beholding their loved one in this condition, both Mrs. Mason and Lorel gasped, and for a moment drew back as they saw him lying there, so white, and swathed in bandages. His eyes were closed, but he was stirring.

"Speak to him, Mrs. Mason," the doctor advised.

"Warren, Warren, dear. Anne is here with you. I'm right here, darling. Can you see me? Can you hear me?"

Slowly his head turned toward her, and his eyes opened, even more slowly.

Then weakly, "Anne—it's so dark! Are you here?"

"Yes, Warren, right here, holding your hand."

"My hand? Oh, yes."

After a little rest, he opened his eyes again. This time he could see more clearly. He glanced about the room, at Lorel standing far back.

"Lorel, are you here too?"

She went to him with a fortitude she had not known was possible. "Of course, I'm here, Dad."

"Hospital?" he questioned.

"Yes. Under Doctor Nelson. He'll help you, Warren. You must just rest and soon—soon you'll be well and strong again."

He tried to smile. "Strong? It doesn't seem I ever could be. I feel so weak—so very weak, Anne."

His eyes closed and he fell asleep. The doctor came closer, felt his pulse and then left, giving word that if there was any change they should call him. For more than an hour Mr. Mason slept. Then he spoke again.

"What time is it, Anne?"

"About eight-thirty, dear. Did you want something?"

"No." Then lovingly, "Anne, did you have your dinner?"

The tender concern for her at this time almost broke her resistance. She nodded in the affirmative, unable to speak.

"That's good." Then he fell asleep again.

As the minutes dragged by all sense of time vanished. Lorel watched her mother, valiantly and with superhuman power carry on. It was seeing her mother so courageous that gave Lorel the power to refrain from yielding to her grief. She and her mother barely spoke. Now and then a nurse tiptoed in and out.

After an unusually long period, during which her father had rested, Lorel went to her mother's side. "Mother, won't you lie down on the cot over there? You ought to get a little rest."

"Oh, no, Lorel. Just let me stay here."

"I would call you the minute he woke, Mommy."

"Thank you, darling. Perhaps you had better lie down. You've had a hard day at the office."

Lorel ceased her pleading, knowing that it would be just as impossible for her mother to rest as it would for her.

Mr. Mason moved and opened his eyes. Lorel noticed a tenseness in his expression.

"Are you in pain, Daddy?"

"No, not very much."

"Warren, dear, what can we do for you? Don't be afraid to speak. Tell us."

With a great effort, he turned his eyes to her and said, as if forcing the words, "Anne, I'm afraid to die."

"Oh, no," protested Mrs. Mason.

"Daddy, you aren't going to die. You mustn't."

"I believe I am," he said slowly, "and what puzzles me, is this fear. I never thought I would be afraid of death."

"What is there for you to be afraid of, Warren? If you are going—you go with a clean record. You have been the best husband and father that ever was. You have been honest and upright and you have gone to church regularly and given your time and your money to it." Mrs. Mason spoke swiftly and convincingly, meaning every word of the tribute.

"I know, Anne. That was what I had been banking on. But now it seems like sinking sand. My feet seem to be slipping. That theory doesn't help me."

"Jesus said, 'Let not your heart be troubled. I go to prepare a place for you and if I go away I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there you may be also.' You know He said that, Warren."

"Yes, He said it; but did He say it to me? How can I be sure of that?"

"Why, you are a church member. And your character, Warren, it's perfect. If He didn't say it to you, to whom did He say it?"

"But doesn't it say somewhere, 'Not all that say to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven?'"

"Oh, Warren, I don't know. I wish I could call Rev. Daniels, but he left for the coast this morning."

Lorel herself felt dead. It seemed as if she were wooden. She could not think, feel, or act. Her mother now seemed wooden too.

How could silence pound in one's ears so? Lorel wondered. What was this barrier between them now? Where was that

care-free comradeship that had always existed between them—that freedom, that liberty, that ease of speech?

Was it true? Was this the end? A glance at her tiny watch showed it was one o'clock. It must be true, or they would have been asked to leave. Visiting hours were long since over. But a private room? Didn't that warrant visitors at any time? Lorel wasn't sure. She had had so little contact with hospitals and sickness and death. "Oh, God," she prayed, "help us, please."

Mr. Mason's voice pierced the stillness. His tone was clear and commanding, "Call Don Coever."

Don Coever! Of course! Lorel rushed out. There was nothing incongruous in calling him. It seemed, suddenly, the only logical thing to do. Lorel marveled that she had not called him long before.

What if he were not there? What if he had gone back to school? But his gentle, "Hello," filled her with gladness.

"Oh, Don, this is Lorel. My father has been in an accident, and is at Leighton Park Hospital. He would like to see you, Don. Could you come?"

"Yes, Lorel. I'll be right there." He had hung up, and through her being surged for a moment a new consciousness of life. How reassuring it was to know now that Don was coming, that now Don was praying, that now Don was on the way. Then the wooden feeling returned, and she dragged her way back to the room.

Don was at the hospital in less than ten minutes. He had been in prayer when Lorel's call had come, and now he went to meet this emergency, equipped with the whole armor of God.

The doctor was just leaving the room as Don reached the door. The two men, meeting without an introduction, shook hands. In a low tone the doctor said, "You must help him now, young man."

Mr. Mason's eyes remained closed. Don walked to Lorel, who merely raised her eyes. He stooped and took both her hands and pressed them closely in his own.

"I'm so glad you called me, Lorel."

"We need you, Don. Dad seems to be afraid—to go. Do you think you can help him?"

"I know I can," he answered, with such assurance that Lorel felt almost joyful.

Then, as Don saw Mrs. Mason still sitting on the edge of her chair, intently watching her beloved husband, he crossed over to her and gently pulled her to her feet. He sat her in the large comfortable armchair that he drew close to the bed, and said, "Now you sit there, little mother, and just relax. We're going to have a blessed time with the Lord."

"Are you asleep, Mr. Mason?" he asked in a natural voice.

"No. I couldn't sleep. I had to see you, Don. I'm going, there's no question about that. The question is, 'Where am I going?'"

"Well, Mr. Mason, the choice is yours. We ourselves make the choice. There are only two places. And I believe you would like to enter that land of joy and peace in the presence of our Lord."

Mr. Mason assented eagerly, "Yes, I would, Don, but how can I? I've tried to be upright, Don," he almost pleaded, as if Don had the power to grant or to deny him admission into that blessed place. "I've been a good husband and father. I've supplied all the wants of my loved ones. I've never touched even a drop of liquor for fear it would take hold of me, and I would bring disgrace to them. I've always been a church member and done all I could to help the work. Do you think I'm good enough, Don?"

Both Lorel and Mrs. Mason were nodding their heads fervently, vouching for the excellence of this, their dear one. Both gasped as Don answered kindly, "No, Mr. Mason, I am sure you are not. True, you have been a most remarkable man as the world measures, but, according to God's measure, you have fallen short. He tells us that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. That includes you, doesn't it?"

"Yes."

"If a man keeps the whole law, and yet offends in one point, he is guilty of all. 'There is none righteous, no, not one. . . . They are all gone out of the way, they are together

become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.' This is the analysis of man according to God's Word."

"Yes, that is what I've been so conscious of these last few hours—unprofitable to God—going my own way—not caring for His. Don, I must go to the other place? Oh, Don, I admit I deserve it. Why should God want me now, after I have lived so selfishly, concerned only with myself and my loved ones, never considering His claim upon me at all?"

"Because He loves you, Dad. Listen to this: 'All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.' Don't you see it? We all went astray; we all turned to our own way, living after the lusts of the flesh. But 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' He bore our iniquity for us. He died on Calvary to wash away your sins—every sin—your sin of living for self. He paid the debt you owe. And His cry, 'It is finished,' meant that it was finished for you. Now all you need to do, is to appropriate the payment of that debt to yourself. Accept it, accept Him and His finished work as your right to salvation—to His free gift of eternal life. Take it, and it is yours."

A soft glow of happiness radiated from Mr. Mason's face. "Son, do you mean it is that easy? Do you mean I need do nothing now, but believe and accept Him? Are you sure that is true?"

Don was almost laughing with holy laughter. "Why, yes, what could the thief on the cross do? There he hung, nailed, helpless, with no chance to rectify his sins. He simply called on the Lord to save him, and the answer was, 'Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise.' Dad, we're dealing in verities. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but His Word shall never pass away."

"Oh, God," Mr. Mason cried weakly, but joyously, "I thank thee for making it so simple, so easy; that Christ, in love and mercy, has borne my penalty for me, and that through thy Son Jesus Christ my sins are all forgiven, and I have eternal life. I thank thee for the peace, for the assurance that I have found the way that leads me home."

Mrs. Mason was sobbing, quietly. Don was praising God for His faithfulness. Lorel, physically still wooden, was intensely alive mentally. Her own words to Don came back to her memory, "You are so melodramatic." Surely, the scenes in which she had found herself ever since five o'clock that afternoon had been melodramatic. Yet, she did not consider Don melodramatic now. Life itself couldn't be melodramatic. It was real. Tragedy, torment of soul, agony did enter the lives of human beings. And so did gladness and joy and exultation. Emotion was the very fiber of a human being. Without it, mankind would be desolate indeed. Why was it, she wondered now, that one expected emotion to be evident in every condition of life excepting religion. No one thought it strange when sports fans gave vent to their emotions. Why, then, should it be strange that the joy of the Christian should be evident? Because her father was demonstrating that joy, Lorel concluded that it was appropriate. No one, having seen his anguish, would wish him to hide his joy in Christ.

After a while, sorrow crept into his eyes. "Don," he said regretfully, "I will have no opportunity to serve the Lord. I will have no opportunity to win a soul for him. Oh that I had yielded to Him sooner, that I might have been profitable to Him."

"You've won me, Warren," Lorel heard her mother's voice, clear and joyous; "you've won me to Christ. Seeing your joy and peace in His finished work for you has led me to appropriate it to myself too. I asked Him into my heart, as you prayed, and He has come. He has come to stay!"

"Anne," her husband rested his hand in hers, "how good He is, to give me you as a star for my crown! And how glad I am to know that we shall be together throughout eternity! And you, Anne dear, will become profitable to Him."

"I'll try, Warren."

"You shall," he said with certainty.

After a moment his expression of peace turned to one of anxiety. "Lorel," he called, "where is Lorel?"

She came to him in tears. "Don't cry, Lorel; this is a wonderful experience. You will miss me; but, Lorel, will we meet again, up yonder?"

She could not answer—not with Don in the room. He didn't believe she would be up there.

"Lorel, Don was right. A definite decision for Christ is necessary. Will you promise me that you'll make it some day."

"Yes, Daddy, I promise you I will, some day."

He held her hand in one of his, and then drew her mother's hand into his free one. From opposite sides of his bed they heard him say, "I'll meet you in the morning."

After some time, Don, seeing that Mr. Mason slept, freed the hands of both of them, and sat with them to wait.

The doctor tiptoed in and out. Just as Lorel again looked at her watch, hardly able to believe that it was five o'clock, just twelve short hours since first she had heard of the accident, Mr. Mason, with a slight sigh that brought them all to his side, entered the Homeland, a look of infinite peace on his face.

Lorel, fearful, watched her mother, who looked long and earnestly at the still form. Then she turned to Don. "Don," she said, "I can't understand it. Now, in this my hour of death, I feel such a sense of peace and security. What is it, Don?"

"Why, little Mother, it is because 'underneath are the everlasting arms.'"

XXI

ONE golden day, late in October, Lorel walked up her steps to the porch, to find Don just closing the door, after a visit with her mother. She met him with a friendly smile. He had been such a comfort and help to her and her mother in their time of need that her eyes always spoke to him of her genuine gratitude.

This feeling of appreciation absorbed any other she might have had. She didn't dig beneath the surface to discover

whether or not that intense love she had once had was still there. If it was, it did not assert itself. Her loss of the companionship of her father had rendered her incapable of any emotion save gratefulness, it seemed—gratefulness to those who through love and sympathy did all they could to make the burden lighter.

"Hello, Don. I'm sorry I wasn't a little earlier."

"So am I. If I wasn't so busy, I'd accept your mother's invitation to stay for lunch. I came to see her about taking the primary class at the tabernacle. She's so interested in the work up there, and she has decided to do it."

"So soon?"

"I believe the activity will be a blessing to her. Of course, she never has grieved as do those who have no hope; but new interests, especially in the Lord's work, will eliminate many lonely moments. You understand that, don't you, Lorel?"

Using the pronoun with a contemptuous tone she replied, "As well as *I* ever could. My mother's attitude perplexes me."

"Her peace, you mean?"

"Well, call it that. I sometimes wonder if she cares that Dad has gone. Sometimes I feel I can't bear it." She shook her head impatiently at the trembling of her lips.

"You know she cares, Lorel. But now she knows what a Friend she has in Jesus—how He bears all her sins and griefs for her. You understand how forsaken she would feel without that comfort. Surely, you wouldn't want her to be without it?"

"No, of course not. But I just can't understand it. Well, I mustn't keep you, if you're so busy. Good-by, Don. And thank you for all the time you've given us. I may seem ungrateful to you, Don, but, believe me, I'm more thankful than you'll ever know. I'm sorry I don't express it better."

"I'm very conscious of your appreciation of friendship at this time, Lorel, and I want you to know that I've been glad of every opportunity to help you and your mother. I hope our friendship may continue. Won't you come to the tabernacle with your mother occasionally?"

"Yes, I will. Good-by."

"Good-by, Lorel." He pronounced her name as if he had intended adding another word. As she went in, she wondered what the word had been.

Lorel was a little amused at the interest her mother took in the little primary class. She even teased her about it in a gentle way.

But Lorel's heart was more perplexed and unhappy than any of them realized. For often there came to her a feeling of the same quality that had been hers when first Don had been saved. It was a peculiar loathing, which filled her with wonder. She loved her mother devotedly, and hated herself for that consciousness of division; yet it was there, hidden but actual.

One day, unable to rout the resentment that flamed in her breast as her mother diligently studied the lesson again, Lorel blurted out, "Oh, Mother, I'm so miserable. I can't understand what has happened to you and Don and Opal and Ben. I just feel that even you and I aren't as close as we used to be. And losing you and Daddy at once is almost too much to bear." Lorel began to sob.

Mrs. Mason put down her lesson book, and sat beside Lorel on the davenport. "Darling, I didn't know you felt that way. Lorel, you are more precious to me than you ever have been. I see you now not only as my beautiful daughter, but as possessing a precious eternal soul. Lorel, why won't you yield yourself to His will? Then you will understand and see these things we see."

"But, Mother, I want to be modern. And this—this religion seems so old-fashioned."

"Well, so is the multiplication table old-fashioned, and the law of gravitation, and the laws of nature. Don't you see, Lorel, all eternal things are old-fashioned, modern, and ultra-modern, because they never change. Inventions of man—clothing styles, architecture, styles in sports may, and certainly do, change; but the things of God will never change. Trees, flowers, birds, and all His creation are still bringing forth each of his own kind, just as He said, in spite of all the efforts of scientists, falsely so called, to prove this untrue.

There has not been in all the ages of civilization one case where like has not brought forth like."

"But, Mother, living such a narrow life! Isn't that old-fashioned?"

"Not any more old-fashioned than living a licentious one. Folks try to call sin and pleasure modern. But are they? We read of Rahab the harlot way back in the book of Joshua. From the laws of Moses we know that this sin was prevalent even at that time. What is modern about it? Murder was committed by the first man born into this world. And worldly pleasures were indulged in by the offspring of Cain, and by the antediluvians. It was their very worldliness that brought down the wrath of God upon them. Don't let Satan trap you that way, dear, making you feel that sin and worldliness are modern, or that unbelief is a sign of modern education and intelligence. Why, Paul dealt with that class of people two thousand years ago, and wrote through the Spirit of God, 'The Greeks seek after wisdom.' But don't forget that, professing themselves wise, they became fools. Even Moses had a great deal of worldly wisdom to contend with when he came into contact with Pharaoh and the magicians of that day. They were very wise, but God, with supernatural laws and powers, brought His people out of the bondage of the Egyptians. And today, by that same power, He is bringing His people, that is, the born-again believers, out of the bondage of the world. It is our freedom from its power and allure that puzzles you."

"Mother, you make us moderns appear so foolish."

"Well, we moderns challenge your right to that title," smiled Mrs. Mason. "We are the true moderns, carrying a message that will always be modern, serving a Living God—and a King, of whose Kingdom there shall be no end. Through the testimonies of the Lord He has made wise the simple, and we know and understand future events by the reading of His Word."

"You, who accept each new book of science as it is published, believe the theory it teaches until, in a few years, a new discovery is made. Then, admittedly containing mere hypotheses, the older book is discarded. The new book is then

hailed as authentic, until still further discoveries are made, and so, in a round-about fashion, never being perfectly correct, all the scientific books written by men will be discarded, and all will bow their heads and humbly admit, 'For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven'."

Lorel evaded her mother's penetrating look, and barely audibly complained of a headache. Conscious of a strange impulse to cry out that she needed something—some one—she resolutely rebelled against yielding to it.

The activities of the little tabernacle engaged her mother's attention more and more as the days went by. A few times Lorel accompanied her mother to the evening services. She reluctantly admitted to herself that there was a noticeable difference between these young people and those of her church. She called it her church although she went there only occasionally, when Hilda succeeded in awakening within her a faint interest.

Trying to analyze this difference, she found she could not. Both groups were equally fun loving, equally well educated, equally moral, equally fine in character. One night she desperately sought to define the distinction. Suddenly she knew that it was sincerity.

When these young people sang, "I Love to Tell the Story," they meant it. They were forever telling it. When they sang, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness," they meant it. They discounted all their own good qualities and consistently vowed their hope was in the blood of Christ. When they prayed, they did not read their prayer from a book, but from within their own hearts and souls they poured out words and petitions to the heavenly Father, whom they seemed to know so intimately. They conducted themselves according to the counsel they read in the Bible. It told them to separate themselves from the world, and so they separated themselves from the world. It told them to love their enemies and to pray for them who spitefully used them, and so they prayed for their enemies. It told them to pray without ceasing, and they prayed. It told them to bear one another's burdens, and they bore one another's burdens. It told them the friendship of the world was en-

mity with God, so they gave up the friendship of the world, that they might be friends of God. It told them that, unless a man was born again, he could not see the Kingdom of God, and they rigidly adhered to this doctrine, that only those who were born again were saved from the penalty, and power of sin. All others, whose names were not often found written in the Lamb's book of life were to be cast into the lake of fire, because the Bible said so.

Yes, they were sincere. But how did one attain this sincerity? Lorel wondered. Among passages of the Scriptures printed on the wall she read, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."

That was what Don and her mother had told her time and time again. It was not working from the outside in, but from the inside out. The secret of this sincerity, then, was to be "in Christ." When a man was in Christ, he was a new creation. Old things were passed away. Yes, she mused defiantly, they certainly were. Her mother, Don, Opal, and Ben had definitely changed. They were not like their old selves at all. And they were forever speaking about new things, new thoughts, new revelations, new life, new hope, new peace, new natures.

A battle raged within Lorel that night in the little tabernacle. She was aware of a challenge, clear and true as the ringing of a bell: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

That was fair, of course. She professed to be willing to do God's will, but if He called her to a separated life, to persecution, to the hatred of the world, would she be willing to do His will? No, she would not be willing. She was not willing to bear His reproach with Him, she was not willing to lose her life that she might find it unto life eternal. So that night, again, with mighty force she put from her the pleading of the Holy Spirit.

XXII

LOREL was alone. Don had called for Mrs. Mason and had taken her to the tabernacle, where they were to rehearse the Christmas program with the children.

The house was in shining order. Lorel walked through the large, sunny, comfortably furnished rooms with satisfaction. She loved the shining floors, the thick soft rugs. The windows, brilliant in the sunlight, were hung with the "castle gate" curtains. Her home was comfortable, well-appointed, inviting. Delighting in its perfection, she inattentively turned on the radio as she passed it. Then, a feeling of laziness stealing over her, she threw herself on the davenport, stretching her arms above her head.

"They who are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh."

Lorel jumped up in alarm. She sank back, laughing rather unsuccessfully when she remembered the radio. They would be needing a new power tube if it took that long for it to warm up. She had forgotten she had turned it on. Meanwhile, the voice continued: "But they that are after the Spirit do mind the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

Of course, it was tuned to the Bible Institute Station. Her mother found very little entertainment in anything else these days. She would turn it to something more cheerful.

Just as Lorel's fingers reached for the dial, the voice came in louder, challengingly: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

The words held Lorel. She stood with her fingers on the dial, but did not turn it. She wasn't a heathen, she told herself. She wouldn't turn it off while God's Word was being read. Then the voice began a prayer. Nor would she turn

it off while prayer was being said. For half a minute more she stood, her fingers on the dial, waiting for the prayer to cease. Then she wearied of her awkward position, and went back to the davenport. This time her attitude was not one of comfort or satisfaction. She sat upright, her arms folded, her lips tight together and her brow wrinkled in a frown.

In spite of herself, she listened to the voice explaining the natural, the carnal mind. Constantly and completely concerned with the things of the flesh—not necessarily evil things or immoral, but with temporal things—homes, furnishings, clothing, wealth, position, business, and so on.

Well, Lorel wondered, what was wrong with that? It is only natural that man should be concerned with the things of such vital importance to himself.

Then the voice took up the life of the spiritually minded. These things must of necessity, because they were in the world, take up some thought; but, primarily, the things of God filled their hearts and minds. Prayer, the reading of the Word, meditating on it—these things were a joy to the spiritually minded. The souls of other men were their concern. Praise to their Lord was often on their lips. They were willing that their steps should be ordered in His Word.

Two men might be equally moral, kind, and upright. But in the mind of one God held little or no place, while in the mind of the other God was supreme. The latter was the man who could say, "O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day."

Yes, her mother was like that, and Don, and those young people at the tabernacle. They were ready at any time for fun, and yet they almost always began with prayer; they never seemed to forget God. The name of Christ was often on their lips with loving intimacy. That must be because they were spiritually minded.

And she was not! Yes, she must admit it. Her mind found it difficult to dwell on spiritual things. She had told herself that the seeming holiness of her mother, Don, and the others was affectation. Yet she knew her mother was above deceit. And it was because she had the Spirit of Christ.

"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his!"

Lorel dropped to her knees. "Oh, God, I'm not spiritually minded. I don't love thy law, nor meditate in it at all. And it's because I'm a sinner. But Jesus died for sinners, and I know He died for me. I thank thee, Father, for that, and just now I want to open the door of my heart, and let Him come in as my Lord and Saviour."

After Lorel uttered these words, her soul was immediately filled with peace. A sense of liberty was hers, and she seemed to be suddenly aware of the vastness of eternity—of the immensity of the things of God.

She had the sensation of one who turns off the light in a room, to behold through its windows the boundlessness and beauty of the great out-of-doors. How small and insignificant in comparison the confines of the room become. One realizes then that the brilliance of the artificial light has kept from him the beauty of the moonlight and the stars. She searched for the meaning of the impression, and found it.

Heretofore, her life had been a tiny little room that had seemed spacious to her because she had never glimpsed the glory or the extent of eternal things. Her own interests, her own desires, her own will had artificially lighted up her life with such brilliance that she had refused to believe there was a nobler, grander, higher aspect to life. But now that she had switched off the light of her own will and desire, she had caught the view of eternal things, the magnitude of the things of God.

Although she did not know it, the same light that had come to the faces of Opal and her mother and her father was now upon hers. "How simple it is," she meditated. "And it really is true that, in yielding myself to Christ and accepting Him as my righteousness, I have a new nature. Why, I'm born of God," she marveled. "And I know now that the spiritual realm far surpasses the material in beauty and joy—and in endurance," she added.

From the radio, in sweetest song, came these words, to which she listened breathlessly:

"He called me long before I heard;
Before my sinful heart was stirred.
But when I took Him at His word,
Forgiv'n He lifted me.

"From sinking sand He lifted me,
With tender hand he lifted me.
From shades of night to plains of light,
Oh, praise His Name! He lifted me.

"His brow was pierced with many a thorn,
His hands by cruel nails were torn,
When from my guilt and grief forlorn
In love, He lifted me.

"Now on a higher plane I dwell,
And with my soul I know 'tis well.
Yet how or why I cannot tell
He should have lifted me." *

As the musical program continued Lorel reached for her mother's Bible. She began reading in John. Every word was precious and filled with meaning now. As she read of the woman at the well she remembered how superior she had felt to this woman before. But now she stopped to comment, "I do believe her sin was not as great as the sin of arrogant pride." After reading the forty-second verse of the fourth chapter, she turned back and read it again. "Now we believe; not because of thy saying, but we have heard Him ourselves and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." Those were the words spoken by the men who came to see Jesus after the woman at the well had gone to them and asked them to come to Him.

Now she thought of Don, of her mother. They had come to her and told her about Christ, but they had been powerless to make Him real to her until she had accepted their invitation to come to Him. But now that she had come to Him personally she, too, could say, "Now I believe, not because of thy saying; for I have heard him myself, and *know* that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

"He Lifted Me," copyright 1933 Renewal, Homer A. Rodeheaver, Owner.

It was with these very words that Lorel greeted her mother and Don when they came home. In wonder and amazement they listened as she told how the new birth had come to her, of how she had made Christ her own.

Don stayed for supper. He and Mrs. Mason had planned to attend a Young People's conference that night. Now Lorel informed them that she would go too, and give her testimony before men.

After they had cleared the table, Lorel noticed the weariness in her mother's eyes, and suggested that she go upstairs and rest a while. Mrs. Mason gratefully obeyed. An afternoon of planning and trying to bring into form a program to be given by children had not been conducive to restfulness. For this one had lost his piece, and that one had forgotten his. This one wanted a different part, and this one wanted a longer part, while his sister desired a shorter one. The songs in the learning would have brought gray hairs to the heads of the composers, could they have heard them sung.

Not until then, when he found himself back again in an intimate and obvious family relation did Don realize that the barrier that had kept him and Lorel apart now was swept away. New hope filled his being as he wiped the dishes Lorel had washed, and listened to her happy chatter. But it had been many months since Lorel had cared for him. Surely, since their friendship had been re-established there had been no evidence on her part that her love had not died. True, he had exhibited no love for her, either. But vibrantly alive, and hidden deep in his heart, his love lived on. Perhaps hers had too.

Lorel was incapable now of tearing her thoughts from spiritual things. It was Don now, conscious of this new hope, who couldn't fasten his thoughts on them. "I know you understand, Lord," he whispered.

When Lorel entered her mother's room she found her fast asleep. Her movements, however, awakened Mrs. Mason. When Lorel saw the effort it took for her to arise, she grew authoritative. "Mother, you are exhausted. I don't believe I'll let you go tonight."

"Is that a command, Lorel? If it is, I'm going to obey you."

It's a Young Peoples' affair, anyway, and I'm sure Don will excuse me, now that you will take my place."

"It is a command. And I want to see you in bed for the night before I leave."

Ready to go, she stopped to kiss her mother good-by and to admonish her against getting up to sew, or even to read. Mrs. Mason promised obedience.

When Lorel told Don that they were going alone, he felt a little guilty at the surge of joy that shot through him. However, he was sure that Mrs. Mason would understand. "I'll have to stop at home for a notebook," he said.

While Lorel waited for him in the car, Don went to his room and took from his drawer the notebook he needed. Then he reached way back to the farthest recess of the drawer and took from the hiding place a small box. He opened it and saw what he was looking for—the ring that he had kept hidden in that one place ever since the day he had entered the deep waters, with his Lord at his side. Now he was coming through. He had not been drowned. He was coming through!

He went down the steps two at a time, with a boyishness he had not felt for months. Lorel's smile thrilled him with old-time force.

"Hurry, Don. You know," she laughed, meditatively, "I used to wonder how you could stand so many meetings. Now I can hardly wait till I get there."

"Isn't it wonderful to have an appreciation for the things of God? Didn't I tell you so?" he teased.

"Yes, you did; but don't forget, I've heard Him myself and now I *know*. Oh, Don, you've been so patient with me."

"Well, not always," he admitted. "Sometimes I felt like shaking you, but I prayed instead."

XXIII

THE church where the conference was to be held was situated on the outskirts of the city. The houses grew sparser and the fields wider as they neared their destination. When Don parked the car Lorel jumped out before he could help her and walked a few steps away from the church. The November night was warm, more springlike than it had a right to be. The golden moon and the stars shone as if with joy. A gentle breeze fanned Lorel's cheeks as she looked away across the vastness of the prairie and then up into the unending sky. Across the street from where she stood a light shone out from the window of a home. Inside Lorel could see people moving about.

When Don joined her, she asked, "Did I tell you how forcibly God revealed to me the vastness of eternity and the limit of the things of time? Here we are, out in this great out-of-doors; our eyes travel thousands of miles, yet we do not see all there is to see, because our sight, being finite is limited. But there, across the way, in that lighted room are a group of people, who do not see even as much of this beauty as we do. They cannot see it, because the electric light limits them to a twelve-by-twelve room. That, just now, is their world. They do not see the moon, the stars, the beauty of this night. If they should turn out the light, their range of vision would increase and they could take in some of this. If they should leave the room entirely and come out here, how much more they would see!

"Just so, I have shut off the puny light of my own life and in reward have caught a view of eternity. Some day, Don, we shall leave the little rooms of our lives and enter into eternal glory. Suddenly, to me, death seems but an entrance into a fuller and more glorious understanding of the things of God than we can ever know down here. No wonder Daddy went so gladly. Don, have you ever felt that you wanted to be there? Have you ever wished that you might be present with the Lord, now?"

"Often, Lorel. Sometimes the desire overwhelms me. And

yet, even as Paul said, 'I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ which is far better; nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.' So, although we can't compare with him and his wondrous ministry, yet in our own small sphere, perhaps, we are needful to others. Perhaps there are souls who would not be won except by you, Lorel, and me. We are ambassadors in a foreign land, homesick many times, and yet remaining on business for our King."

"How wonderful that is, Don. To think that He would or could use me to win someone to Him. Yes, as far as I can see, that is the only reason we could even want to remain here."

The sound of singing reached them, and they hurried in to join that great happy throng of young people gathered there that night to praise and worship God.

Lorel never forgot that service. Her heart, which always before had been so stony in meetings of this kind, was melted tonight. She rejoiced exceedingly that she, too, knew the power and the love of Him of whom they sang and testified. She had completely forgotten the thing that had been such a hindrance to her acceptance of Christ, the worldly pleasures she had loved. Now, as many told of desires turned toward God rather than toward the perishable things of clay, she realized that these things had lost their appeal for her, also.

It wasn't that she intended to give up these pleasures. They simply held no more appeal for her. They did not seem to be especially wicked; it seemed just that they would be so futile, so empty. It would be as unsatisfying as turning from her baby to play with a doll would be to a young mother. She thought of Gay, so outrageously happy and proud of baby Joy. She tried to imagine Gay laying aside that warm, responsive child to hold and fondle the doll which had satisfied her during her childhood, before she had known the sweetness of living reality. Oh, yes, the world and its glittering baubles might satisfy, in some small measure, the soul that had never tasted of the sweetness of Christ. But one, having known Him and His love, could truly say, "Take the world, but give me Jesus; all its joys are but a name."

And the pleasures the world offered never satisfied in the day of need. In bereavement, in sickness, in sorrow, grief, or trouble, pleasure only served to deepen the wound. Lorel knew that well. But Christ and the joy He gives are a solace in the days of trouble. That was because He was real, because you had to combat reality with reality. People could be advised to smile their troubles away, but even though they did muster the smiles, it didn't help the trouble. That was working from the outside in, and though the smile might cover the aching heart, it could never heal it. No, Christ alone satisfied.

The time of testimony would soon be over. She wanted them all to know that she belonged to them, through Jesus Christ their Lord. She rose, and in a clear, cool voice told them, "Today has been for me the happy day when Jesus washed my sins away. I yielded my life to Him this afternoon, and in the few short hours I have been walking with Him I have known more of joy than I ever knew in all my life before. I rejoice to know that my sins are gone, washed in the blood of the Crucified One, that for me there is now no condemnation, because I am in Him."

All eyes were upon her with love and rejoicing. The leader began with,

"O happy day that fixed my choice,
On Thee, my Saviour and my God.
Well may this glowing heart rejoice
and tell its raptures all abroad."

He asked, then, that all who had been saved during the day sing the chorus, and sing it they did:

"Happy day, happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away!
He taught me how to watch and pray
And live rejoicing every day.
Happy day, happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away!"

Then he invited all who had been saved at night to sing "Happy Night." They were far in the majority. The words rang out in praise and gladness:

"Happy night, happy night, when Jesus washed my black heart
white!

He taught me how to sing and shout,
And live for Jesus, out and out.
Happy night, happy night, when Jesus washed my black heart
white!"

Lorel enjoyed every minute to the full. More than once she marveled at her own absorbing interest in the message. And then she told herself that it was because she was spiritually minded now. She no longer needed to pretend interest in godly things.

At the close of the meeting she was astonished to hear Opal's voice, even before she saw her. "Lorel, you darling! Oh, I've prayed so often for you. I've been so afraid that some of those 'smart' opinions of my own little two-by-four mind might have been hindering you. I'm so glad that that's off my conscience now."

And then there was Ben Jackson taking her hand and saying ineloquently, "It's nice, Lorel."

Seeing Lorel's surprise that she and Ben were together, Opal actually blushed. She held out her hand for Lorel to see the diamond glittering on her third finger. This news so astounded Lorel that she sat down again, pulling Opal beside her. "Opal, is it really true? You and Ben Jackson? Why I never dreamed of such a thing!"

"Well, I must say your unadulterated surprise isn't very flattering."

Lorel laughed. "Well, Opal, I really didn't think there was a spark of romance in your head or your heart; but as I told Don one time, you will be a competent wife."

"That's what I thought," agreed Ben, while Opal received Don's best wishes.

Refreshments were to be served in the basement of the huge church. The four of them joined the throng that was slowly moving down the steps. There were so many that only the heads and the shoulders of the young people were visible. Suddenly Lorel was conscious of fingers, fingers she knew belonged to Don, touching hers. After a moment of indefinite contact, they reached out and entwined themselves about hers. Back flooded memories of that day in the park, when first he had held her hand in his. The thrill of his touch coursed

through her again with all the force of newness. For a moment she kept her head lowered. Then, deliberately, she turned and met his eyes. There was no mistaking it. His eyes were speaking his love to her as surely as if the words were said. For another moment she withheld from hers her own secret, and then, unrestrainedly, she let creep into them the deep longing and love she had always had for him.

The basement was filled with the din of happy voices. More than once Lorel's heart rejoiced as she heard some young person alluding to Christ in the friendly way she had wondered at. And when a young girl came to her and told her that it had been her testimony that had influenced her to accept Christ that night, Lorel's joy knew no bounds.

As Opal and Ben had come by bus, Don offered to take them home. They accepted gladly. Because Opal lived nearer to Don's home, Lorel expected that he would take her home first, and then Opal and Ben. But as they neared the corner of Lorel's street he sped up and passed by. Lorel's heart missed a beat.

After Opal and Ben were safely desposited, it was surprising how Don's car lost its speed.

"If you don't get me home too late, I might ask you in."

"How late would 'too late' be?"

"After eleven."

Don looked at his watch. "Seven minutes." The car shot forward. Neither of them spoke.

Walking up the steps, Lorel demurred, "It's pretty late."

"One minute left, young lady. Hurry and give me your key."

They left their wraps in the outer hall, and entered the living room without turning on a light. The street light shining through the curtains created for them again the shadowy castle gates in all their beauty.

"Don't turn the light on, Lorel. We're back in our castle." The spider net was etched upon the walls, upon their faces and upon Lorel's white arm. Don traced the delicate outline of the shadow on her arm with his finger, silently. Suddenly he turned and walked to the window. His form blotted out all the beauty of the castle gates, and the room was in dark-

ness behind him. He remained there so long that Lorel at last went to him.

"What is it, Don? Is something troubling you?"

"Oh, Lorel, I'm in such a quandary. Ever since I've realized that the division Christ makes is gone, I've been waiting to ask you if you still cared. I couldn't wait to get home to ask you—and then when we came in and I remembered the castle gates, I realized that I have nothing to offer you. You see, Lorel, my ambitions are changed. I know now that if Christ should call me to full-time service, I would want to obey that call. And dare I ask you to share such a life with me. It might mean sacrifice—or even want."

"Well, Don, I'd try not to hinder your service."

"Lorel," he gasped, embarrassed, "that isn't what I mean. I mean you are so accustomed to comfort and you deserve to be sheltered and protected. I couldn't ask you to share the unknown with me."

"Accustomed to comfort! Yes, but so are you, Don. And would you allow that to keep you from service? No, you wouldn't, because you love Him who for our sakes became poor, that we might become rich. Don't forget, Don, that I love Him too, now. That having His Spirit, I, too, have the desire to seek and to win the lost. I'm not very familiar with the Bible yet, but I know that in it He promises to supply all our need. I do expect Him to supply that, and, oh, Don"—falteringly, and then impetuously—"I need you."

"Lorel, you mean that, don't you? It means that you love me, doesn't it?"

"Now, don't pretend you didn't know it. You knew it on the stairs, didn't you?" she countered mischievously.

"Yes. I would have toppled over with joy if that vast throng hadn't held me fast." His arms were about her now, and at last again he felt the amazing softness of her lips against his.

"And we're going out together in service for Him, Lorel?"

"Yes, Don, together. Isn't that a precious word—together?"

"Most precious, especially when it means you and me." He remembered the ring then and brought it out and slipped it on her finger. "Diamonds are fitting to symbolize our

love, darling. The fires of testing and trial won't destroy it. We know that now, don't we?"

The clock chimed out the midnight hour.

"You must go, Don. Goodnight."

"Goodnight—" He still lingered.

"Why don't you go?"

"Well, I've got to hear you say it. I can't go till you do."

"Say what?"

"Guess."

"That you're nice."

"No."

"That I like you?"

"No."

"That I—I love you?"

"Yes."

"I love you."

"And I love you." Then, minutes later, "Do you know my eyes are heavy with weariness, Don?" He pulled the light cord then and looked at her under the lamp's soft glow. "Your eyes are shining brighter than that diamond. And you're as wide awake as a morning-glory. Why did you fib to me?"

"Oh, Don, if you wait for the shining to cease, you could never go. You'll have to leave me like this."

"Well, I will, if you promise you'll have that morning-glory look tomorrow. Will you?"

"I promise."

And so, after just a few more minutes, he was gone. Lorel ran up to her room. She looked at herself in the mirror. Her reflection was so like the one she remembered that night so long ago, when she had been glad for the darkness that had hid the secret of her heart. Tonight, remembering he had seen her so, and had known the reason why, she smiled. "Well, I don't care. He loves me too."

Later, snuggling beneath the warmth of the blankets with her lips against the diamond, she reflected joyously, "Oh, it's sweet to be in love—and be loved—especially of Don Coever."

XXIV

LOREL, peering through the kitchen window of Gay's tiny apartment, because there had been no response to her ring, saw Gay frantically motioning for her to enter. Lorel let herself in and found Gay holding two safety pins between her teeth. With one hand she held the baby, and with the other she carefully folded the garment she had just removed. Laying it aside, she removed the pins from her mouth and laid them aside too. Then, after drawing a deep breath, she began, without a word of greeting, "Just look at her, Lo! Did you ever see so bright a baby for her age? You're lucky you got here just before her bath. She gurgles and coos when I splash her with water. It's too cute for anything!

"You know, we're beginning to think her eyes may turn brown. Look at them closely, Lorel. What do you think? Oh, my lands! the wind has blown the door open. Shut it quickly." and she turned her back to it, using herself as a screen between the open door and the baby.

"It's just such little things as that that might change our entire lives. Why, just think if Joy should get sick and die! Well, Lorel, what would Ken and I have to live for?"

Lorel's eyes had twinkled more and more merrily during Gay's talk. "Well," she observed drily, "you did manage to live some twenty years without her."

Gay looked at Lorel reproachfully. "Well, there's nothing I can say to you, Lorel. You'll never understand until you have a baby of your own."

"Silly Gay. I do understand. I know what such a loss would mean even to me. I was just teasing you."

Gay had lowered Joy into the tub, and now she deftly washed the plump little body as she held her supported in the water with her left arm. Baby Joy squealed out her delight and splashed water over her mother and onto the floor. "Didn't I tell you so?" reveled Gay.

Baby Joy remained the center of attraction, attention, and conversation. Her feedings, her night awakenings, her yawns, her position while sleeping, which according to the best

authorities, indicated perfect health, Gay informed Lorel; and her eyes, her hair, or the lack of it; her smile, her toes, and everything about her kept their tongues going while Gay took her from the tub, laid her on a large fluffy towel, patted her dry, powdered, shirted, diapered and booted her.

When Gay lifted the soft white bundle from the dressing table, Joy sent forth a loud, lusty wail. Gay's eyes widened in wonder and amazement. "Just imagine that! She knows that her bottle is due. Really, Lorel, she grows more wonderful day by day."

Lorel agreed. She loved little Joy devotedly, and today, when for the first time she could look at her without that awful tug in her heart, without that fear that she herself would never know the joy of possessing so sweet a part of life, she waxed enthusiastic in her praise. She plied Gay with questions, which Gay, in a most superior air, answered just as enthusiastically.

Lorel held the baby while Gay tested the temperature of the milk by letting a drop of it touch her own wrist. Then she spoke loudly, so as to be heard above the wails of little Joy, "Come into the living room and we'll talk there while I give Joy her bottle."

The bottle quieted the cries so quickly that both Gay and Lorel laughed in their delight. And Gay tenderly scolded the baby for her lack of manners as she noisily gulped the milk in greedy satisfaction.

"Lorel, haven't I even asked you to take your hat off?" apologized Gay at last. "Get your coat out of the kitchen and put it on the bed. Do make yourself at home. Don't wait for me to be correct any more. I'm afraid Joy is dragging me down to her level as far as etiquette is concerned."

While Lorel carried out the orders, Gay's mind was evidently torn away from the care of the baby, for the moment Lorel reëntered the room she said, "I hear that you and Don are all made up. How did it happen? I'm dying to hear the details."

Then Lorel told her of her own experience on the previous Saturday afternoon. She told of how the conviction had come to her that she had been rejecting Christ and His love,

and how that when she had invited Him to be the Lord of her life, He had come into her heart, and that now He dwelt there in power and love. "And, Gay," she finished, "it's the most blessed thing I've ever done, yielding myself to the will of my Lord. I'm praying now, that you will too, Gay."

Since Lorel had mentioned the name of Christ, Gay's eyes had been lowered. Never once had she removed them from the bottle she held in her hand, while the milk had slowly but surely diminished from five ounces to a mere half ounce.

After a moment of silence, Gay looked up as she took the bottle from the sleeping baby's lips. "Well," she said, almost defiantly, "I don't blame you, Lorel. As I said to Ken, anyone could see that Don would never change his religion, and marriage, a home and children are worth a great price. I don't blame you for being willing to forego a few worldly pleasures in order to gain it. Why, look at Ken and me. We hadn't been to a dance for almost a year, and then last week we went to one. Do you think we enjoyed it? We did not. All we did was to keep wondering if Mrs. Allan had given Joy her bottle on time, or if she had covered her properly, or if Joy was crying for us; and so we left hours before it was over. It had lost its fun. Joy is first in our lives now, and so even if Don won't take you to any amusements now, you can assure yourself that you won't care for them anyway, after you're married for a while. Of course, a wife can always coax her husband her way, so if any special affair comes along, you'll be able to inveigle Don into going to it."

Lorel was looking at Gay with stricken eyes. Quietly she asked, "Do you really believe that, Gay?"

"Believe what?" asked Gay, uncomfortably, "that a wife can induce her husband to do her will? Of course I do. At least I can."

"No. Do you believe that I'm just pretending, in order to win Don?"

Gay was positively wretched now under the hurt of Lorel's eyes. "Well, Lorel, after all you've said about it, how could I believe anything else? I can't believe you'd fall for anything so old-fashioned as 'Billy Sunday' religion."

"It's even more old-fashioned than that, Gay. It started

before the foundations of the world. It was then that God, loving man and knowing that he would fall under every testing, thought of the plan of redemption. It was then that He decided to send His Son into the world to die for the sins of men. It was while we were rebellious, while we were yet sinners that He died for us. But listen, Gay, my mother explained it to me. This salvation, not religion, as you call it, is modern. Modern, because it was up-to-date two thousand years ago, one thousand years ago, today and tomorrow and forever. You see, God never changes. It's just as foolish to call salvation through the shed blood of Christ old-fashioned as it is to call a tree old-fashioned, or the sun, or the moon, or the violets, or the mountains. True, they were here before we were, but don't forget, they'll still be here after we are gone. Let's be modern, Gay, and admit that the unchangeable things are always up to date.

"Beside that, salvation is desirable because it's eternal. Think of it, Gay, eternal life! How wonderful to know that God could love us so that He would send His only begotten Son to die for us!" As Lorel noticed Gay instinctively hold her baby a little closer at the thought of this, Lorel continued, "Don't you see, Gay? Why, you can hardly bear to be separated from your beloved baby when you know she's in good hands, with someone watching her every moment, concerned about her comfort and welfare. But God sent His beloved Son for the very purpose of being laughed at, spit upon; to be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; to wear a crown of thorns, and to be crucified because He loved you and me so much."

"My arms are tired. I think I'll put the baby in her crib." Lorel noticed, however, that there was something in Gay's eyes that looked suspiciously like tears as she carried the baby from the room.

After a time, Gay called from the kitchen, "Come out here, Lo. I'd better straighten up in here, and wash up some of these things." And so the subject was ended for the time being.

They chatted incessantly while the kitchen was put to rights and the little garments were washed and hung up on

a line on the porch, where the sun crept in. Gay importantly mixed milk and water and syrup with the precision and caution of a chemist perfecting a valuable formula. When the six shiny sterilized bottles were filled with the warm milk, covered with rubber stoppers, and placed on their tray in the refrigerator, Lorel almost wished she were the baby. "They do look nice," she commented wistfully.

Gay laughed. "Now I know it's time to serve your lunch." So forth from the refrigerator came lettuce and tomatoes, and from the cupboard, a can of soup and a piece of left-over apple pie. Preparing and eating the lunch, they felt as though they were little girls again, playing tea party as they had done so many times before.

"Being married is lots of fun, isn't it, Gay? You seem so happy. Home-making is an interesting art."

"Oh, it is, Lorel. I'm so glad you're going to be married too. It's funny. Ken isn't making much money yet, and we have to do without so many things that once seemed a necessity, especially now, since Joy has come; but they just don't mean a thing to me anymore. Why two years ago, I wouldn't have wanted to wear the same dress on more than three special occasions, and now I've worn the same one for months. Every time I don it Ken says, 'You're beautiful in that dress, Gay. It does things to me.' Then it seems that there isn't another dress in all the world I'd wear that night, even if I had a dozen to choose from. I'll admit it may be just psychology on Ken's part, to keep me satisfied. Well, if it is, all I can say is, it works."

Then it was Lorel's turn to relate some especially dear little idiosyncrasy of Don's, and before she had finished, Gay had thought of something absolutely incorrigible in Ken, which, from her words, sounded exasperating, but which Lorel knew, by the inflections in Gay's voice, she would not have altered or modified in one degree. And so it went on, Ken and Don, and Don and Ken, and back again to baby Joy.

AT THE tabernacle Don was adored by young and old alike. When he brought Lorel to them, a new creature in Christ, and as the girl who would one day be his wife, they welcomed her royally. Knowing the power of the darkness that belongs to Satan, none censured her for having caused their beloved Don such great sorrow. Most of the older ones had known of it, through Opal and Ben, and had prayed earnestly and secretly that God would give him the desire of his heart. Now they rejoiced in answered prayer, and they loved Lorel because Don loved her, even before they learned to love her because of herself.

Lorel, in turn, basked in the spirit of worship that prevailed among them, even among the young people. Their meetings were all devotional, not in name only, but in spirit too. They lived out the songs that they sang, they poured forth prayers from their hearts, and they witnessed faithfully to others of Christ and of His power to save. How gladly and freely Lorel could now sing with them, "Let my friends despise forsake me; they have left my Saviour too."

Because Don was bound to his studies at the Institute, he and Lorel had very little time together; but the moments they did have were filled with precious enjoyment. The Christmas holidays multiplied these moments, and they took advantage of Don's freedom from class duties by spending long days together.

At the midnight hour on New Year's Eve Lorel knelt beside Don in the little tabernacle. In silent prayer and meditation the group lifted hearts to the heavenly Father, while the whistles and bells without announced the coming of the New Year. There, with her hand in Don's as it always was, whenever it could unobtrusively be so, Lorel compared last year's pleasure to this. She remembered the noise, the din, the laughter. She remembered the aching, bleeding heart that her own laughter and shouting had covered, and she wondered how many tonight were trying to cover broken and sorrowful hearts with laughter and simulated gayety. Oh,

could they but know Jesus and the peace that Jesus gives! If they would but turn to Him, rather than to the counterfeit peace the world offers, the peace that does not last! A cry escaped Lorel's lips for those who were out of the ark of safety, out in sin, in loneliness and despair, without hope and without God in the world. She prayed that God would use her in that coming year to bring hungry and heartsick souls to Christ, the bread of life.

Later, while the happy New Year wishes were still being offered, Don drew Lorel out through the door of the tabernacle. The world was white with snow. Lorel caught her breath in surprise, "Don, did you ever see anything more beautiful?"

"Only you. You were breath-takingly beautiful under the electric light, but here, in this light, with those huge snowflakes caught in your lashes, you are ravishing!"

"Don, tomorrow is our last day together. What shall we do? Something to remember for a long time?"

"Any day I spend with you, regardless of what we do, I will remember for a long time."

"Don Coever, you're so in love that you're becoming impractical. You mustn't answer every question I put to you with a sweet nothing."

"Is that all my thoughts of you amount to?" he asked, in mock reproach.

"Not really," she confided. "They mean everything in the world to me. But what shall we do tomorrow?"

It was Opal who settled that question. They giggled as they heard her voice coming through the door, "You don't suppose they would have dared to sneak off home without saying goodnight?" And then as she saw the snow, "Oh, snow!" And, with that versatile mind of hers that seemed to meet each new situation in just the proper manner, she said, "What do you all say to a sleigh-ride party tomorrow night?"

By the cheers that came from the young people she knew the idea was appreciated. She smiled complacently as they cried, "What's the matter with Opal? She's all right!"

She planned it efficiently. She would arrange to have the sleigh at the outskirts of the city at eight on New Year's night.

Ben would place the orders for a hot meal at an inn far out in the country. And so, because of Opal's clever contriving, some forty young people had another glorious memory to live in their hearts all through the years.

Warmly bundled in woolen sweaters, mittens, stockings, and caps, they piled out of their cars the following night and excitedly waited the arrival of the sleigh. They squealed with pleasure when they saw it. It was a low sleigh with just one long seat on each side. Hay was piled in the center. It was drawn by a team of horses.

They climbed into it eagerly, and without much concern for propriety. The young men, each planning to find the choicest and least ostentatious seat for himself and his adored one, clambered in before the approaching sleigh had fully stopped. Amid the confusion, however, it was difficult to determine just which seat afforded the most privacy. As the seats were rapidly taken, each, finally, had to sit down just wherever he was. Don spread their robe over the space he thought he and Lorel would require. Then, excitedly, he looked for her as if the sleigh might be swifter than the train *Hiawatha*, due to pull out within two seconds.

"Lorel, where are you? Lorel! Where did she go?" Then he saw her wrestling with Ben, who was trying to wash her face with snow. Now, wasn't that just like Ben? For, with docile faith, Ben supposed that he and Opal would just naturally be with each other.

Don called out in impatient concern, "Come on, Lorel! You won't get a seat!" His voice was only one of more than forty raised in giving or asking instruction, however, and so it was lost forever in the winter night. Ben and Lorel continued to play, and Lorel, at last finding herself free from Ben's clutch, ran still further afield. In dismay, Don watched her fall headlong into the snow.

"Careful, Don, you'll fall over the edge if you lean out much farther. Yes, I saw them," Opal said with a sigh of resignation, "but don't abandon ship now. We've got the best places and you and I'll have to be the steadying influences in our respective families, I'm afraid. See, someone

has tried to take that end seat already. It's a good thing we're here."

It was time to leave. The driver, experienced in the ways of the young, signaled the horses to start. He knew that if he waited till all were aboard, they never would start, for no sooner did one more climb up than another fell or jumped off to obey the impulse to roll in the snow or to cover some one else with it.

Now, as the sleigh started forward, the stragglers climbed aboard with yells and cries and pulls from those already in it. Lorel and Ben, who had wandered far off, were suddenly aware of the diminishing din. They turned to see the sleigh in movement. Ben grasped Lorel's hand and pulled her along with him so swiftly that her feet scarcely touched the ground. Opal and Don, observing from the sleigh, shouted frantically and gesticulated wildly for them to hurry, as if the waving of their arms could in any way speed the runners.

Fortunately, the sleigh was not the *Hiawatha*, and before long the two stragglers caught up with it. Ben lifted Lorel and dumped her into the waiting arms of Don. There she lay, panting and gasping for breath. Ben climbed in beside Opal, breathing heavily, while Opal chided him for his irresponsibility.

"There, now," joined in Don, "I hope you're listening to Opal, Lorel. She's said just what I want to say to you. But I'm so mad, I couldn't think of the words."

Lorel laughed, "I think you're just jealous, that's all."

"Well, we've a right to be."

Someone started to sing "Jingle Bells." It was inevitable, of course. The horses would probably have stopped in their tracks had any one ever begun with any other song.

In a few moments they were away from all the lights of the city. As they jogged along the lantern up in the front of the sleigh cast a faint glow on the snowy street. The night was dark and received no light from the slender sliver of a moon. But the very whiteness of the snow-laden fields and roads lent a weird and mysterious light to the world.

The singers swung from "Jingle Bells" into lively gospel choruses. The surrounding beauty finally penetrated and

silenced the chaotic merriment. Except for the crunch, crunch of the horses' hoofs and the faint tinkle of the sleigh bells, silence reigned.

Someone began to sing, "I Need Thee Every Hour, Most Gracious Lord." With true reverence, all joined in and sang the song through.

Lorel, whom Don had bundled up carefully, despite her protests that she was hot, yes actually hot, sat close to him now, with his arm tight about her. Her heart swelled with joy. How true the song was! Not for a moment did she forget that she needed Him every hour. She was glad to be with a crowd who recognized that need also. Even as she sang, she knew that as soon as the song was ended there would be more laughter and more foolishness. But the blessedness was to know that down underneath that gay surface, deep in the hearts of these boys and girls—these near men and women—burned an abiding love for Christ. It was sweet to be here with them, gay, warm, comfortable, with the arm of him she loved about her, and with the abiding presence of Christ within her.

A soft snow began to fall, and now the moon was gone. Never, never had she seen anything more fascinating than that white expanse glistening with an ethereal glow.

Just as Lorel had predicted mentally, the moment the song was over, pandemonium again broke loose. George and Helen jumped from the sleigh, which certainly wasn't moving very fast, and, with a wave to the crowd, called, "We're in a hurry, excuse us please." By walking briskly they managed to keep well ahead of the slowly moving sleigh. Immediately a couple of the other boys, who had not succeeded in getting next to their desired ones, saw their advantage, and followed in the wake of Helen and George. A few girls, here and there, who, too, had been annexed by the wrong aspirant, and a few who from sheer inability to sit quiet for so long a time slid from their cramped positions and began snowball fighting and games of tag and racing.

"Want to walk a while?" Lorel asked Don.

"Not unless you do. I like to be here like this. We don't often have such opportunities. Oh, Lorel, I can't wait till

graduation in April. Do you think we could be married then?"

"Well, what are your plans, Don. Have you thought of foreign fields?"

"Yes, I have, but as yet I haven't heard the call. So many at the Institute have wonderful testimonies regarding calls to certain fields. Do you know where my heart seems to be?"

"No. Where?"

"Right here, in Chicago. In this big city among the multitudes, especially the church members who seem to think they are saved because of morality, or just because they go to church."

"That's where my burden is too, Don. For people like Gay and Ken and the Greys and the Jacksons, for people just like you and I used to be. I wish they could understand that salvation is a reality and an experience, not merely a theory to be locked up within one's head."

"Well, then, perhaps this is our field—Chicago, with its thousands of lost souls. Just how or where God will lead us into service I don't know, but He surely will make the way clear. I believe I'll start in at the office as soon as school is out. Or," wistfully, "as soon as we return from our wedding trip. Could we do that, Lorel? I have mother's money now that she wanted me to have, and we could be married before I started working. Would you like to be married this April, Lorel?"

"Would you mind very much if we waited until September, Don? You know that's the month Dad went home, and it may seem strange, but that's the month I'd like to have my wedding in. Do you understand?"

"I believe I do. But it seems so far away. Is it too early to plan our honeymoon? We've got to arrange to visit Aunt Beth then, for I warned them I'd bring you there and show them that I have the prettiest, the darlinest, the adorablest girl in all the world."

"Donald Coever, you didn't! You told the mother of two girls that? Why they'll be unfavorably prejudiced before they see me."

"Not Aunt Beth. She'll love you as much as she does Lois and Eunice."

"Well, I've always wanted to motor around Lake Michigan. That would be ideal. We could stop at Aunt Beth's on the way home."

"Planning it makes it seem nearer. Let's tell the rest!"

"Oh, no, not yet."

"I want them to know."

"I want mother to know, first."

"Oh yes, of course. But I feel like shouting it out."

"You'd have to if you wanted to be heard. Did you ever hear so much noise at once?"

"I'd forgotten where we were. Isn't the din deafening? Come on, let's walk. I'm too happy to sit still."

Opal and Ben joined them, while those already fatigued from play took their places. A short walk found them at the little Inn, where ravenous appetites were appeased with barbecued sandwiches, French fried potatoes, salads, pies, and coffee. Hymns were played on the old piano that customers were at liberty to use, and young voices sang with merry hearts. Impromptu solos and quotations from the Bible were called for. A Bible quiz was staged, with Don as questioner. Lorel was amazed at the knowledge the young people had of the Word of God. She herself was studying it daily, and hoped that by the following year she would win more points for her side than she had this time.

The homeward ride was quieter. In most cases, each man had found his maid and contrived to find the desired place, and tenaciously kept it, lest anyone else achieving it refuse to relinquish the seat. Fewer and fewer were the puns and jestings. Softer and longer were the sacred songs, and as they neared the journey's end, the sparse comments of the die-hard wit lent a jarring tone, until even he realized that jocularities had wearied the crowd. Admitting defeat, he joined the rest in their songs.

After Don's graduation in April, he finally took the position in his father's office. His secular work, however, did not hinder his service for Christ. The pastor, Rev. Thomas Davis, called upon Don to preach in his stead, more and more often.

The knowledge that Don had gained at the Institute, coupled with his Spirit-filled life and his zealous love for all humanity, fitted him well for the task.

In the summer he took over the teaching of the adult Bible Class, and Pastor Davis came and sat under his teaching. He would sit there with tear-filled eyes, nodding his head in approval as Don broke the Bread of Life to them.

His people noticed their pastor's failing strength and, with love in their hearts, they demanded that he conserve it by lessening his duties. He himself knew that before another year went by he could be depended upon for very little of the work. Secretly, he prayed that if God willed it, Don might be his successor.

After a time, he spoke of it to Don, and together they prayed about it. Don felt a responsive urge, and knew then that this was to be his place of service. For the time being, he would remain at the office. And he would remain there, he decided, as long as there were Spirit-filled men in the congregation who would help him with the pastoring of the flock. The funds then could be used for missionary work and the furtherance of the Kingdom.

Don was intensely happy with the arrangement. Now the only thing necessary to complete his joy, was his wedding to Lorel.

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ALLAHABAD. XXVI

It was the first day of September, Lorel and Don's wedding day! If Lorel insisted upon waiting for September, he would demand that it be the first day, Don had told her with adorable obstinacy. And so it was.

What excitement prevailed at the tabernacle! Every available space was piled with flowers and ferns. It resembled an outdoor fairyland, for not even nature itself would have produced so gay and so varied a collection of beauty in so small a space.

At the door, Arthur Hendricks, on guard, allowed only a peek to satisfy the curiosity of the excited young folks, to say nothing of their elders. No one dared enter.

In charge of the door leading from the basement to the upper auditorium was Dorothy, aged nine. She was to close it immediately after anyone went through, to keep any possible odor of roasting chicken or baking pie from wending its way up the stairs to mingle with the scent of roses. Dorothy was fully aware of her tremendous responsibility, and more than one guest had started at the swiftness with which the door had shut behind him.

They had insisted that Lorel and Don be married at the tabernacle, that all be invited, for not one would want to miss this gala event. And Lorel and Don, loving each one, had known that never could they make a choice of guests from among that group. Every one was wanted, was necessary to make the wedding reception complete.

So the ladies had decided that they would prepare the dinner. In addition to the set of silverware they had given them as a wedding present, they would give Lorel and Don their wedding dinner. And they thought it perfectly fitting and proper that they should do this. Was not Don their new pastor? Well, not yet, of course, but he was Pastor Davis's assistant. And when the time came, and they believed it was near, when the years which had dealt so kindly with him should take their toll and demand less labor from Pastor Davis, well then, was not Don to be their very own pastor? Indeed he was. He had definitely turned down an offer from his office executives to accept the position of branch manager in Cleveland. That opportunity would have afforded him a successful future, financially. In Chicago his chances for great advancement were very slim. But Lorel and Don, after discussing it, knew that they had been led into service here at the tabernacle, and here they would stay, giving of themselves and their time in the service of the King.

Ken and Gay were exasperated. If only Ken had had the offer! How quickly he would have accepted it. But this new religion of Lorel's and Don's seemed to render them foolish. How could they prefer the meager existence that would be

theirs if ever Don took over completely the ministry to that little flock to the financial independence and the prestige that would be his as an executive in Cleveland? But Ken and Gay didn't believe from the bottom of their hearts, as did Don and Lorel, that one soul was more precious than all the world beside.

Of course, it was true, as Gay pointed out, that there were precious souls in Cleveland as well as in Chicago, but Lorel had replied that the demands on Don's time in the new capacity of manager would leave no time for him to find them and win them for his Lord. So he had turned it down.

Mrs. Hendricks bustled about, checking over the list of those who would bring the chickens already stuffed and roasted to be reheated there just before serving. And how was Mrs. Abbot getting along with the cole slaw? Mmm! that looked good! Yes, she would taste it. Well, perhaps just a dash of sugar. Yes, she always used a little. And Mrs. Larson, dicing the beets. My, they would add to the color of the feast, wouldn't they, placed on the green lettuce, garnished with mayonnaise and paprika? Mrs. Burton, having scraped the carrots, would prepare the cream sauce for them. Oh, how brown and crisp the pies looked! And the cakes! Fifteen of them were promised, besides the huge wedding cake and the gallons of ice cream that Mr. Coever was sending.

The long tables were spread with finest linen and with gleaming silverware; the fragile glassware sparkled delicately. Each housewife had brought her best belongings to grace the table, and, with justifiable pride, each told herself that the result was nothing short of perfection. But there was no time to stop to enthuse now. The wedding party would arrive in less than two hours. The ladies must finish up the necessary tasks, and then rush home to change from kitchen maids into fine ladies attending the wedding of the season. A number of the young folks had been invited to serve, and the ladies would retain their leisurely rôle, once they had changed.

At last, all was in readiness. The pecks of potatoes were peeled and soaking in cold water. Hot water would be ready, and as soon as the bridal party left to have their pictures taken the potatoes would be put on to boil. That would give

them plenty of time. And Mrs. Newman, who lived next door, would make the coffee over there.

The door was locked, and all took their departure, all but Arthur, who must needs remain and stand guard. For nothing, nothing must happen to spoil the carefully laid plans.

The wedding was to take place at four o'clock. It was now three. In Lorel's room, Gay lovingly stroked the wedding gown, hanging in all its beauty on the satin-covered hanger and protected by cellophane.

"I wish Lorel would hurry."

"So do I." Even Opal was breathless with excitement.

"Here she is," sighed Gay, in relief, as Lorel entered, wrapped in her fluffy robe.

"Here are your stockings, Lorel. I've never seen anything so cobwebby before. You take them from the box, I'm scared to touch them."

So, with their help, or hindrance, Lorel soon was ready to put on the wedding gown. Her mother entered the room just as Gay took the gown from its cover.

"Mother, dear, how sweet you look. You'll steal attention away from the bride. Now, don't let that tear fall and spot your dress. I know you're thinking of Daddy. I have been, too, Mother, but I'm sure he knows. I almost feel his presence, and I know he's rejoicing in our happiness. He would never want to see that tear in your eye. Let's wipe it away." And Lorel took the wisp of lace that was her wedding handkerchief from the dresser and wiped the tear away.

"Oh, Lorel! Your wedding handkerchief! You shouldn't have used it for this!"

"Why not, Mommy? It could hardly be used to wipe away more than one tear; or it might, perhaps, be used for two."

Then Opal, "Come, Lorel, you must get into your dress." But because she knew just how her heart must be longing to help, Lorel skillfully managed to gain her mother's help in donning it. "Gay, you get my veil, and, Opal, see if my flowers are arranged properly. Mother, you help me into this."

There she stood. Gay gave the veil too, to Mrs. Mason,

and she placed it on Lorel's queenly head. Opal then handed the flowers to Mrs. Mason, who put them into Lorel's arm.

All four of them stood silent, gazing at Lorel's reflection in the long mirror, at the long satin gown, beautiful in its simple lines; at the veil, suspended from the back of the narrow wreath of orange blossoms, in definite contrast with the black of her hair; at the white roses and the lilies of the valley which had been Lorel's choice for her wedding bouquet, because that was what her mother had carried at hers; and at the deep blue of her wondering eyes, the pink of her soft cheeks, and the red of her parted lips, the only color about her.

"I do look rather sweet," she said tremulously. "Do you think Don will think so?"

Dispelling sentiment, Opal said severely, "I think you should have allowed him to see you first. It isn't fair to subject any man, especially the groom, to such astonishing beauty without some preparation."

Lorel laughed. "Opal, if you say I'm that beautiful, it must be true. You never did believe in flattery."

The limousine was at the door. In subdued excitement they left the house. They stopped for the little four-year-old twins who had been born on different days—May Belle at 11:45 o'clock P.M. on May 31 and June Rose at 12:15 o'clock A.M. on June 1. They were the flower girls. May Belle wore blue tulle, long, ruffled, and picturelike. June Rose was an exact replica in pink. They were to scatter rose petals before the bride as she walked down the aisle.

At the altar, facing the rear door, Don, with Ken and Ben beside him, eagerly watched for Lorel. Opal came first, softer, sweeter than she had ever been before. Ben's heart contracted as he watched her. Gay came next, more sedate, more stately, thought Ken, than he had ever seen her.

Then came the little flower girls, bringing smiles to all as they slowly and carefully dropped the flower petals for the bride. When Lorel entered, delighted "ohs" were faintly audible. Don, seeing her walking toward him on the arm of her mother in all the fascinating beauty of bridal array,

gasped inwardly, and prayed, "Oh, God, thank you for her, and help me to make her happy always."

They reached the altar and stood there together until the music ceased. Then they heard the voice of Pastor Davis, "Who gives this woman to this man?" Softly, but loud enough for all to hear, came the response, "I, her mother."

Smilingly she presented Lorel to Don, who turned with her to face Pastor Davis. Hidden from view, Joyce began to sing as only she could sing:

"Beneath the Cross of Jesus, I fain would take my stand,—
The shadow of a mighty rock within a weary land;
A home within the wilderness, a rest upon the way,
From the burning of the noontide heat, and the burden of the
day.

"Upon the Cross of Jesus, mine eyes at times can see
The very dying form of One, who suffered there for me;
And from my smitten heart with tears two wonders I confess,—
The wonder of His glorious love, and my unworthiness.

"I take, O Cross, thy shadow for my abiding place;
I ask no other sunshine than the sunshine of His face:
Content to let the world go by, to know no gain nor loss,
My sinful self my only shame, my glory all the Cross."

Then Pastor Davis, his white hair like a halo about his head, read from the Word: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. . . . For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh."

Marriage, said the pastor, was an institution of God, and the love of husband and wife for one another was a holy thing. They were bidden to love one another with the intensity and permanence of the love Christ had for His Church when He gave Himself for it.

Then, when he said, "Will this man and this woman now join their right hands and pledge their word," Lorel and Don

joined hands, and then came Don's voice, clear, earnest, reverent, "I, Donald, take thee, Lorel to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance, and thereto I plight thee my faith."

Then Lorel made the same vow in a voice that was clear, if a little tremulous. Don placed the ring on Lorel's finger, and, holding it there, said, "With this ring I thee wed; and with all my worldly goods I thee endow: in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Pastor Davis spoke again; "The circle, the emblem of eternity, and gold, the type of what is least tarnishable and most enduring, is to show how lasting and imperishable is the faith now mutually pledged. In pursuance of your solemn pledges thus given, and in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit I now pronounce you man and wife."

After his prayer for blessing upon their lives together, Joyce sang again a hymn which referred to a place of quiet rest near to the heart of God.

When the recessional wedding march began, all speculation as to whether or not Don would kiss his wife right there before them all was ended. For he drew her close and kissed her tenderly, while smiles of approval wreathed every face.

The young people appointed for the purpose hurried into frilly aprons, and began preparations for serving. The ladies who were supposed to be guests only could not completely retain that rôle, however, and gingerly entered the kitchen and poked into this and that to see that all was well. It was.

All was in readiness when the bridal party returned, but it had to wait until Lorel had greeted Uncle Ben, Aunt Beth, Eunice, Lois, and Paul, who had arrived just before the ceremony. With dewey eyes, Lorel paid tribute to Aunt Beth for her part in making their marriage such a blessed one. She knew how different it would have been had Don and she not known Aunt Beth's Lord.

After dinner, toasts were given to the bride and groom, and each speaker ended his eulogy of Lorel and Don with

praises to God the Father and God the Son. Don, seeing his aunt's face flushed with joy, caught her eye, and each knew the other was remembering the time when testimonies had been so loathsome to Don.

Hymns and gospel choruses were sung. Older folks gave bits of advice to the happy young couple as they started their journey through life together. Some spoke with trembling sincerity, some with matter-of-fact wisdom, and some with humor. But a great depth of love was manifested in every word.

After the tables were cleared of all but the snowy cloths and the fragrant flowers, the guests mingled with one another to comment again and again, "Wasn't it a beautiful wedding?" "Did you ever see a more beautiful bride?" "And did you notice that look in Don's eyes?" "Yes, he all but worships her." "And she does him, too." "They are perfectly matched." "Both so good-looking and both so in love with each other!" "And with the Lord."

It was nearly ten. That was the time Don and Lorel had planned to slip away. Opal and Gay had already left to see that Lorel's traveling things were ready and to be there to help her change into traveling clothes. No one else, save Mrs. Mason and Mr. Coever, knew of the plan. Because their departure together would attract too much attention, Don went out alone and hurried to the shady side of the building, where he stood beside a large low window, through which it had been arranged Lorel was to come to him.

Lorel drew her mother into a little side room and locked the door. "We'll be leaving in a minute, Mother."

"Yes, Lorel. I know you're going to be very happy. I'll be praying constantly for your safe return."

Then Lorel spoke rapidly, "Mother, I want you to know that until tonight, when you entrusted Don with that responsibility, you have made me very happy. There's nothing you could have done that you have not done to make me happy. I want you to know that Don and I are not coming back to share your home with you from a sense of responsibility. Don loves you almost as much as I do, Mother, and we wouldn't want any other arrangement. I'm glad Opal is

going to stay with you while I'm gone. She'll take better care of you than I ever could. But we'll be back soon, Mommy. Good-by."

In spite of the gallant speech, she clung to her mother, trembling. Any more sentiment would have brought tears, so Mrs. Mason turned to facts. "Opal and Gay have been gone for some time. You'd better go, dear, and God bless you both."

When they reached the window, Don removed the screen, and Lorel stood on a chair and stepped through. Don replaced the screen, and he and Lorel returned Mrs. Mason's wave of the hand, and hurried to the rear of the tabernacle, where Don's new car waited for them. It was their wedding gift from his father.

Don had chosen deep blue for its color, to match Lorel's eyes. He had thought of yellow and brown, but he knew how so obvious a taunt would hurt Glen, and it was easy, now that Lorel was his, to pity Glen rather than desire to flaunt his success. And Lorel didn't wear yellow and brown always, but her eyes were always blue. And she would always be his. So, in the new blue car, Lorel and Don started on their honeymoon.

XXVII

As DON drove off the highway and down the narrow road which led to his aunt's home a sense of peace enveloped him. There was something about the tranquil scene that reached deep into his soul. Above, the lazy clouds drifted through the blue of the sky. The breeze brought varying pleasant odors. For a moment, he had to give his undivided attention to driving down the narrow road of the steep hill.

Making the U turn at the bottom, he turned to Lorel. "Is it as wonderful as I told you it was?"

"Yes, indeed! And we're nearly there now?"

"We'll be there in five minutes; back with others, after the most gloriously happy two weeks that ever man had. I've been so proud of you, Lorel. And your fine sense of appreciation of the beautiful, and your imagination have made dear and unforgettable to me events that I might otherwise have forgotten. Because that night we watched the sun set from the eastern shore of Lake Michigan you pretended that the world had turned upside down because of our happiness. I'll never forget it. And I'll always remember the narrow winding roads in the north wood, lined with fragrant pines, because you likened them to the narrow way with Him we love, and compared them with the hot, sticky, smelly highways which accommodate so many who are on their way to destruction. Just your comments increase the value of the experiences to me. Everything you say and do, Lorel, is breath-takingly fascinating to me."

"Oh, Don, I can't think of another gracious thing to say in reply to your incessant flattery. I'm afraid you're just favorably prejudiced because I belong to you."

"I doubt that. But, anyway, the important thing is that you do belong to me."

Even before Don turned the car into the driveway they heard the excited voice of Eunice, "Here they are! Here they are!" She came bounding across the lawn, forgetting all about the grand grown-up manner with which she had so impressed them at the wedding. She clapped her hands in childish delight.

Then Aunt Beth, Uncle Ben, Paul and Lois were all crowding about them too. Had they enjoyed their trip? How had the weather been? How had they managed to sneak off that night without the crowd knowing of it? Were they tired? Would they want to rest? Oh, that was good. Then no time need be wasted. They could spend all their time together.

The questions came so speedily that, at last, Lorel just laughed instead of trying to answer them. Then Aunt Beth insisted that Lorel and Don go to their room for at least a moment of rest.

"Is it the same one Don had that night after the big bad mosquitoes bit him?" asked Lorel.

They all smiled, for Don had told them all about it. "Yes," answered Aunt Beth, "the very same one."

"How delightful! Hurry, I'm anxious to see it." And then as they crossed the threshold into the large, comfortable room Lorel said, "How cozy it is! I don't suppose anything but the convicting power of God could make anyone as miserable as you were that night, Don, in a room as adorable as this."

Don looked about quizzically. Finding its way through the branches of the apple tree just outside the window, an autumn breeze came, bringing with it the sweet smell of apples, and blowing the gay pink curtains to and fro. "It does seem as if it would be impossible to be miserable here," admitted Don.

Paul and Eunice, who had helped them carry their bags up, left the room. A gay chintz rocker invited Lorel to try its coziness. Just then Don spied some letters on the table, and discovered they were addressed to Mr. and Mrs. Donald Coever. He held them up before Lorel's astonished eyes. "Letters! For us?"

"Of course. Aren't we Mr. and Mrs. Donald Coever?"

"Why, yes. Oh, Don, one's from mother. You read the one from Dad while I read hers. The other's from Gay."

Eagerly Lorel read that her mother, although missing her dreadfully, had been most comfortable under Opal's care. Mrs. Mason repeated some of the dire threats that had been made against them when the doting crowd had discovered that she and Don had slipped away the night of their wedding. Hearing their names again, it seemed so long to Lorel since she had seen them all. It would be fun to be back with them, her friends and her darling mother. The letter went on:

"Opal won't write. She says you probably wouldn't want to take your eyes from each other long enough to read her news. But she said I should tell you that your wedding made quite an impression on her mother. Mrs. Grey was utterly astonished and most favorably impressed at the wedding. She had supposed that all the people who had been in need of conversion were of the type who ate with their knives and drank from their saucers.

She was bewildered to find that these born-again, converted people knew as much about conventions as she did, and were so cultured and so correct. She has come out with Mr. Grey to each Sunday evening service since then, and Opal is rejoicing and asks you to join with us in prayer that her mother and father will see their need of regeneration."

Lorel told this good news to Don, and received his father's greetings to them from him while she opened Gay's letter.

"It's addressed to both of us, Don. Shall I read it aloud?"

"Yes, do. It'll give me an unequalled chance to study and wonder at the length of your eyelashes. You seldom keep them closed long enough to satisfy me. You want to see all that goes on about you."

She laid her head back against the chair and closed her eyes. "There, is this the way you'd like me to walk about all the time?"

Quietly, Don reached her side and kissed her eyelids. They flew open then, and she scolded him lovingly, "And then you wonder why I keep my eyes open most of the time. It's just because I never know what you're apt to do while I'm not watching. A wife with my responsibility just has to keep her eyes open."

Laughingly, Don took his seat again. "I'll promise to be good. Get on with Gay's letter now. I know Eunice is worrying Aunt Beth to death with, "Well, why don't they come down? What on earth is keeping them up there? Couldn't I just go and give a tiny little knock on their door?"

So Lorel began:

"Dear Lorel and Don:

"I wanted you to know, just as soon as I possibly could what your wedding has meant to me. I have never attended one more beautiful or more impressive. During rehearsals I never gave it a thought, but that night, as your mother gave you to Don, Lorel, and the two of you stood there in that attitude of worship while Joyce sang, my heart was touched. As she sang,

'I take, O Cross, thy shadow for our abiding place;

I ask no other sunshine than the sunshine of His face:

Content to let the world go by, to know no gain nor loss,

My sinful self my only shame, my glory all the Cross.'

I recognized that within me was born the desire to know Him as intimately, as dearly as you did. And after you were His forever, Lorel, and Joyce sang again, 'Near to the Heart of God,' I knew that there was no place more desirable than that.

"I suppose you were too busy to notice my preoccupation all through the dinner and the evening. But Jesus was speaking to me.

"When we reached home that night, I threw myself into the big chair in the living room and I sat there for a long time, thinking. Ken came to me and asked me whatever could be the matter. I told him nothing was wrong, but he said he knew there must be, for never before had I come home from anywhere without first rushing to Joy's crib to see how she was. It was true; I hadn't even thought of Joy. So I went to her room, and there she lay, sleeping. Of course, Mrs. Allan had taken the best care of her. One little foot had pushed its way out of the blankets. Her chubby little arms were stretched out and on one lay her huge white bunny; you know, the one you gave her. Her golden red curls were damp and her lips were parted in a half smile. Oh, Lorel, I do love her so much. And as I looked at her there, I remembered how you told me that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, knowing that He would be despised and rejected by the very ones He came to save. Suddenly my heart seemed unable to bear the ache in it. Jesus had done that for me, and I had the audacity to rebel against Him, to reject His claim on my life, to refuse Him admittance into my heart. Well, Lorel, I knelt down right there, in my orchid taffeta gown, and was just about ready to call upon Him when Ken came in. He wanted to know what on earth I was doing.

"I told him simply and definitely that I had decided to accept Jesus Christ as my Saviour, that I knew I was a sinner, an arrogant, proud, rebellious sinner, but that now I was going to Christ to ask Him to save me. Ken looked at me for a moment, and then what do you think He did? He knelt right there beside me and said, 'Include me in that Gay. I think that we, as parents, need Christ to help us in our responsibility.'

"So I prayed and used the pronoun 'we' instead of 'I'; and it happened just as you said it would. 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.' So Ken and I rose from our knees, new creatures in Christ Jesus. And now every night we take our Bibles and read from them together. Doesn't the Bible contain the most wonderful promises, Lorel? We can't wait until you

and Don come back. There are so many things we want to ask you about.

"We wanted to be the first to tell you our great news. We gained a promise of secrecy from your mother. Now we want to thank you both for your loving witness to us and for your uncompromising lives. We know that God is going to bless you abundantly in your surrendered lives.

"With Christian love, and oodles of the old love from both of us,

"Gay and Ken."

Lorel's lashes lifted and she looked wordlessly at Don. He left his seat on the edge of the bed and came and knelt before her. He took her hands in his.

"What can we say, Lorel? Only 'blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.' Truly, 'the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God unto salvation.'"

"Let's go and tell Aunt Beth. Oh, Don, there's never going to be an end to this thing she started. We, by His power, are going to win more and more souls for Him, and having won them, according to His promise, they shall abide forever."

Their week with Uncle Ben and Aunt Beth was one of blessed fellowship. For the first time Lorel learned how truly at home a Christian feels with other Christians, even when first they meet. "It's because we are of the same nation, the holy nation, and our customs and languages are the same," explained one dear old saint of God when Lorel mentioned it.

"Why, I never thought of it that way," smiled Lorel. "And that's the reason, too, I feel so ill at ease in the company of those not born of God. And the reason they feel ill at ease with me," she added.

One day Don decided to take Lorel to the spot where the mosquitoes had bitten him, to the place where he had known such misery. Eunice asked if she could go with them, but her mother remonstrated, "No, Eunice, Don and Lorel haven't had a moment to themselves since they've been here.

They will decide this is a poor place for a honeymoon. Can't you let them have this afternoon alone?"

But Lorel had objected, "No, let her come along, Aunt Beth. We'll have plenty of time alone through the years."

"Not if you are a pastor's wife, my dear," Aunt Beth had laughed. "You just don't know how every one in your flock will suppose that you are his special property; they'll make unending demands upon your time and privacy."

"Well, then, we may as well accustom ourselves to it. Come along, Eunice, if you don't object to being the third party."

Aunt Beth shook her head resignedly as Eunice replied, "I don't mind what I am, just so I may go along."

When they reached the place, each of them in turn tried the seat formed by the trees. "It's a charming nook, Don."

"It is now, with you here. But it wasn't then, with you hundreds of miles away from me."

"Where are you going," they called to Eunice, who had started toward the road.

"I'll wait for you at the car. I s'pose Don'll want to have the memory of kissing you there, so I'll give him the opportunity."

With twinkling eyes, and somewhat abashed, Don exclaimed softly, "This younger generation!" as though that could be the only possible explanation for such frankness. But he did not contradict Eunice, nor call her back.

Sitting on the stump together, Don remembered his loneliness and longing on the day when first he had found this place. He remembered the selfishness of their plans, and spoke of it to Lorel. "Now, Lorel, the loneliness and longing for you are turned into fulfilled desire. And through the change wrought by Jesus Christ, our lives now are yielded to Him that we might serve Him by bringing others into the light of the Gospel. How selfish we were then!"

Silently, they meditated on the difference now of their aims, their desires, and ambitions. Each of them sensed the strength and durability of their love for each other, for it seemed the mutual love they had for Christ was as a strong, enduring fiber running through and increasing and making

permanent that human love, the love between husband and wife.

The last day of their visit had come. On arising in the morning, they found the outside world drenched in rain. Drops were falling desultorily, but now and then, as they gained vigor from some hidden source, they would descend with impetuous force for a few moments, only to give up to lazy, indifferent pattering again.

Eunice was delighted. She supposed the rain would delay the impending departure. But Lorel and Don said that they must go. They were expected at home for a late dinner that night, and both knew with what anticipation they were awaited, with what festivity they would be welcomed. Nothing must disappoint the loved ones at home.

Their bags were packed and safely locked in the luggage trunk of the car. All was in readiness before breakfast. At the table they made tentative plans for future visits. Paul and Grace would probably come to Chicago for their honeymoon. They were to be married in the spring.

Lorel remembered that she had left her letters upstairs. At once, Eunice, Paul, Lois, and Don, all rose, saying they would get them for her. Lorel laughed merrily. "One would suppose I was a dear old lady of eighty-five and entirely incapable of caring for myself," she said. "Now, you just sit there and see how easily I make those stairs."

Don's eyes watched her as she went through the door, and then they eagerly watched for her return. He smiled at her as she reëntered the room.

"Gracious!" commented the ever observant Eunice, "I always heard that after you were married you sort of got over that being in love; but they're worse."

They all laughed but Lorel. She turned to Eunice with starry eyes. "Eunice, this kind of love will last forever. Don't let the cynicism of this age disillusion you like that. My mother and my dad"—her voice broke, but she regained her composure—"still loved each other after twenty years. And as much as Don and I love each other now, I know that our love will grow richer and deeper through the years.

"And my father," almost whispered Don, "after twenty

years, during fifteen of which he has not even seen or heard her voice, still loves my mother with a deep, abiding love."

Uncle Ben reached over and took Aunt Beth's wrinkled and toil-hardened hand in his, and asked, "And how about us, Eunice—your mother and dad? Did you suppose we weren't in love with each other?"

With pursed lips, Eunice reflected. "Well, I do believe you are," she replied. "I'm so used to you, I didn't think of it. But, yes, the more I do think of it, the more positive I am that you are. That look in mother's eyes when your back hurts; that concern in yours when she looks so tired—well, of course, you love each other. But what I mean is, your eyes don't follow her around continuously. Dad, wherever she goes, Dad, and you don't look so utterly lost when she leaves the room, like Don does when Lorel leaves."

They couldn't help laughing now, and Don caught Eunice as they rose from the table and rumbled her hair. "I'll just bet it's because you wish you were in Lorel's place," he teased.

"Well, of course," admitted Eunice, roses blooming in her face.

XXVIII

THE last good-by had been said. The car was speeding through the peculiar morning twilight on its way home. The rain-washed countryside was fragrantly exhilarating. Lorel sighed.

"Now, what did that mean, darling?"

"Just that I am the most blessedly happy person in all the world."

"I'll challenge you. I believe that I am."

"Oh, Don, it doesn't seem fair that one family should have so much happiness."

"Family!" mused Don. "Why, yes, we are a family. Not yet complete, of course," he smiled at Lorel, "but a family

just the same. To me, Lorel, that word is one of the dearest."

"And to me. Isn't it precious to you, Don, that families are God's plan? And precious above measure to know that we belong to His family? That through faith in Christ we are sons of God and joint heirs with Christ? Don, I'll never forget the first time you quoted that passage to me. Remember?"

"Remember!" and by the pathos of his voice she knew that that experience was etched deeply in his heart, that the scar of it would always be there, that it would remain throughout eternity—that suffering of this present time which she had caused—to work for him a far more exceeding weight of eternal glory.

"Although I denied it then, Don, I knew that I didn't belong to His family. I knew God only as some unobtainable distant being. But you knew Him as your Father, as a very present help in trouble. I envied your intimacy with Him, without admitting it even to myself. I knew you knew Him. I knew He, in the person of His Son dwelt within you, even as you said. But I was too proud to admit my need of Him.

"Oh, I would have liked to have His protection, His power and His love, but if it meant surrender to His Son, obedience to His Son's wishes, I proposed to have none of it. How foolish I was! And I understand it even better, now that we are married. For instance, I would never have expected gifts from your father before, but now that we are married, his generosity to me, as much as I appreciate it, doesn't seem incongruous at all. I know that his generosity to me is through his son. Because I have surrendered myself to you, therefore I am accepted in you."

Don, keeping his eyes upon the road, nodded. Lorel continued, "And surrender to Christ far surpasses the joy of surrender to one's husband. Even as you, Don, expect obedience from me, I love to give it, for these are your commands," she mimicked skillfully, "'Wear your sweater, Lorel. It's chilly.' 'You must stop reading in this light, Lorel. You'll ruin your eyes.' 'Lorel, don't lift that. It's much too heavy for you. I'll take it.' Oh, your commands are easy for me

to obey, because they are all for my welfare. And so are Christ's. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. I'm so glad, Don, that I've yielded myself to His will."

Without answering, Don turned the car off the highway and drove down a narrow road. He stopped it and shut off the motor. To the question in Lorel's eyes he replied, "I want to pray. Do you?"

"Yes."

There they sat, their eyes unclosed, their fingers entwined as Don spoke to their heavenly Father. "We thank thee, Father, for eternal life through Jesus Christ thy Son, for the light of the glorious Gospel that has shone into our hearts by faith in Him, for thy family, and that we belong to it. Bless us, we earnestly pray, that by thy power we may win more precious souls into the family of God which abides eternally." Together they said, "Amen."

Lorel began to sing, and Don joined in:

"I once was an outcast stranger on earth,
A sinner by choice and an alien by birth.
But I've been adopted, my name's written down
An heir to a mansion, a robe, and a crown.

"I'm a child of the King, a child of the King!
With Jesus my Saviour, I'm a child of the King."

As they sang the last triumphant word, the sun burst through the clouds in a radiance of glory. All the world was bathed in sunshine.

Then, with the radiance of God's blessing upon them, they started the car toward home and their future together.

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